

# Open Research Online

---

The Open University's repository of research publications and other research outputs

## The political economy of curriculum change in further education : the case of the Business and Technology Education Council

### Thesis

#### How to cite:

Swatton, Nicholas Paul (1993). The political economy of curriculum change in further education : the case of the Business and Technology Education Council. PhD thesis The Open University.

For guidance on citations see [FAQs](#).

© 1993 The Author



<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Version: Version of Record

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:

<http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21954/ou.ro.0000e052>

---

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online's data [policy](#) on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.

---

[oro.open.ac.uk](http://oro.open.ac.uk)

Dx 179630.  
UNRESTRICTED

**Nicholas Paul Swatton**  
**BA(Hons.) M.Ed.**

**The Political Economy of Curriculum Change in Further Education:  
The Case of the Business and Technology Education Council.**

**A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.**

**Centre For Sociology and Social Research in the School of Education.  
The Open University.**

**Date of Submission: 1st March 1993.**

Author number: M9193327  
Date of submission: 19 February 1993  
Date of award: 15 December 1993

## CONTENTS

Abstract	(i)
Acknowledgements	(iii)

### Part One

Chapter 1	Introduction and overview	1
Chapter 2	Methodology	17
Chapter 3	The politics of vocational education	31
Chapter 4	Skills and the clerical labour market	68
Chapter 5	Business education: problems and solutions	102

### Part Two

<u>Overview</u>	137
Chapter 6 The impact of BTEC in colleges	148
Chapter 7 The teachers' response	185
Chapter 8 Teaching as a labour process	217
Chapter 9 Students or workers?	236
Chapter 10 Conclusions	272
References	287

## Abstract

This thesis offers an account of the origins and purposes of business studies courses validated by the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) and their relationship to changes in the nature of clerical work. The thesis examines the ways in which BTEC courses may be said to prepare young people for a place in the workforce and the way in which teachers and students in FE colleges interpret and respond to the courses.

Part one offers an analysis of political interventions intended to reduce the power of educationalists by increasing the influence of 'market forces' in further education. It is argued that BTEC courses can best be understood as part of a state strategy to facilitate change in the labour market.

Evidence relating to the deskilling of clerical work is examined and it is argued that such deskilling gives rise to a demand for transferable clerical 'skills'. Using evidence from archive material, it is argued that the underlying purpose of BTEC business studies courses is the creation of a clerical labour market where such 'skills' can be traded.

The second part of the thesis, based on fieldwork undertaken in two colleges, analyses the impact of BTEC courses within FE and assesses the degree of central control over the practice of teachers. The nature of the practice which BTEC sought to encourage and the mechanisms through which change was to be achieved are examined and related to the analysis in part one of the thesis.



The response of students to the demands of the courses within one college is analysed and evidence offered which suggests that many characterisations of the role of FE in preparing young people for a place in the labour force understate the role of young people as active participants in this process.

## Acknowledgements

I should like to record my thanks to the following people who have contributed in various ways to the preparation of this thesis.

To my supervisors, Geoff Esland and Denis Gleeson, for their help and advice throughout the project. Roger Dale was my supervisor during the initial period of my registration. Roger, with Geoff Esland and the other members of the E353 Course team, sparked my interest in the State and Education which ultimately led to the production of this thesis.

I should also like to acknowledge the contribution of friends and colleagues, particularly Wendy Mitchell and Dave Pearce, who have taken an interest in my work, maintained a sense of humour and encouraged me to continue.

Thanks are due to the staff and students of Nash and Wyvern Colleges who agreed to be interviewed in their own time, without their goodwill the thesis would not have been possible.

Responsibility for any faults or deficiency in the analysis remains with the author.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

#### Overview

This thesis addresses the nature of the relationship between the economic system and day-to-day practices in Further Education (FE). This relationship has sometimes been characterised by the description of FE as the 'hand maiden of industry'. Such a characterisation takes the relationship as unproblematic and tells us nothing about how the 'needs' of industry are identified and presented as demands to the FE system and nothing about the way in which the organisations and individuals who go to make up the FE system interpret and respond to such demands.

The thesis sets out an analysis of the ways in which the perceived needs of the employers of clerical labour have been articulated to FE colleges through the activities of the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC), and the ways in which staff and students in colleges have responded to the demands of BTEC courses. The structure of the thesis reflects these two concerns: this chapter and chapters 3 to 5 present an analysis of the intentions which underpin the design of BTEC Business Studies courses and relate these to the changes in the nature and organisation of work made possible by the development of micro-electronic (new) technology. In the second part of the thesis chapters 6 to 9 deal with the responses of teachers of business studies and of students following BTEC courses in colleges of FE to the demands of the courses. The thesis offers an explanation of the causes and consequences of their differing responses. Throughout the thesis the significance of the particular points made for an understanding of the relationship between the wider education

system and the economy is indicated.

### Introduction

This chapter identifies the major issues which are to be addressed and developed in the remainder of the thesis. Substantive discussion of the issues are developed in the chapters indicated.

This introductory chapter attempts to highlight the importance of distinguishing the relationship between education and industry from that between practices in FE and the demands of work. It does so in order to establish the context of the main problem which the thesis addresses: the relationship between the day to day practice of FE and the 'demands' of the economic system. It seeks to establish a relationship between the design of BTEC business studies and other vocational courses and changes in the nature of work. Further it seeks to offer evidence of the mediating role of BTEC and teachers in FE colleges between such changes in work and the courses which students experience.

The thesis examines the ways in which BTEC courses offered in FE colleges may be said to prepare young people for a place in the workforce and the way in which teachers and students in FE colleges react to and reconcile the differing demands placed upon them by the courses and their own perceptions of their roles. This thesis therefore addresses the 'Macro' relationship between the Economy and the education system; it also addresses the relationship at the level of BTEC as an institution, where the policies through which FE colleges offering BTEC courses are intended to operate, are determined; and finally at the level of the FE Colleges where the policies set out by BTEC are translated into practice. The relationship between the various levels of focus need to be made clear: it would be easy

to formulate an 'explanation' of the relationship which was perfectly consistent at the theoretical level but which ignored the mediating role of schools and colleges. It is one project to explain the relationship between education and the economy; it is quite another to examine the day to day relationships between FE and work.

The first section entitled 'Education and Industry' identifies the increasing emphasis attached to business values at all levels of education and argues that central to this emphasis has been changing definitions of skill in the economy. The chapter analyses the significance of 'skills' in the curriculum of BTEC Business Studies courses and relates these to changes in the organisation of work made possible by the development of new technology and its application to clerical work. The second section of the chapter (Further Education and Work) highlights the questions which are addressed in the second part of the thesis which analyses the response of teachers and students in FE colleges to BTEC courses and offers evidence about the mediating role of BTEC and teachers in FE colleges between such changes in work and the courses which students experience.

### EDUCATION AND INDUSTRY

This section identifies certain themes - responsiveness to employers needs; curricula based upon 'skills'; and the demand for relevance - which permeate the design of vocational courses<sup>[1]</sup>. The themes are identified in relation to vocational education as a whole and provide the context for their examination in relation to BTEC in particular.

Current public debate about education policy largely takes place within a framework that accepts as axiomatic that the purpose of education is the preparation of young people for their position as workers. Statements of

education policy for all major political parties are couched in terms of education equipping young people with the skills which they need to enter the workforce, and spending on education and training is justified in terms of investment in the skills which are necessary for the future wellbeing of the economy (see, for example, Labour Party 1990). This widespread commitment to vocational education and training reflects a shift to the Right in political debate. It is based upon an acceptance that the role of government should be limited to those measures which will make the market work more effectively. The attraction of vocational training to the Right is that it is premised on the assumption that individuals can 'pull themselves up by their bootstraps' (Cutler 1992).

Since the mid 1970s there have been many initiatives which have sought to increase the influence of business values at all levels of education, from primary school to university. In Further Education the initiatives which have had the greatest impact on the work of teachers have been the creation of a series of training schemes for the young unemployed (YOP, YTS, YT) and the creation of the Business Education Council (BEC) and the Technician Education Council (TEC)<sup>[2]</sup>. These bodies merged in 1984 to become the Business and Technician Education Council (BTEC), which was subsequently renamed the Business and Technology Education Council on 1st January 1992. It is the significance of the work of these bodies which forms the focus of this study.

The ideological rationale for increasing the influence of business in education is given by Wright (1989), discussing the establishment of Local Employer Networks (LENS) to represent the demands of employers to Local Education Authorities when planning vocational education and training:

"[LENS] resulted from a realisation of the urgent need to address the lack of skills in the workforce, the fact that the education and training system was failing to provide what was needed... If education and training is to be truly vocational it must relate to 'real' work. This is not an area of teacher expertise, nor can it be... only employers have direct access to what industry is about and what their present and future workforce needs to know." (Wright 1989)

The rationale offered for these interventions has consistently been the suggestion that there is a mismatch between education and the demands of industry. Criticisms have focused on alleged anti-industrial values at all levels of education and the failure to produce young people with the skills demanded by employers. However, the sources of those problems have been presented, at least in part, as the concern with social democratic principles of equality of opportunity at the expense of a perceived national interest which depended upon a closer relationship between schooling and children's future economic roles (Brown 1991). These criticisms have been used to establish a 'bridgehead' for employers in the education system. This is intended to increase their power in determining the content of the curriculum - BTEC, for example, insists that employers should be involved in the planning and design of courses. It is also intended to alter the process of schooling and to promote a concern with 'discipline' and 'standards' which it is alleged have been neglected. The intention to reorientate the curriculum is not simply exhortation - The Technical and Vocational Initiative (TVEI) was supported by extra central government finance for schools and colleges developing vocational courses at a time when they were facing cuts in the base 'Academic' budget from Local Education Authorities. This and other initiatives represents the success of the 'New Right' in shifting the terms of the debate about the organisation and purposes of schooling. The dominant themes of the intervention have been to reduce the power of the state and to promote the power of the consumers of education. These consumers are conceived of either as

parents, as demonstrated in the increased powers for parental governors in schools and the ballots over 'opting out', or employers, whose interests are discussed in the remainder of this thesis. As Brown argues, reforms of the education system over the last 15 years have been premised upon the idea that schools are capable of providing solutions to Britain's social and economic problems (Brown 1991). Crucially the reforms which have been introduced have had the greatest effect on the curriculum of 'non academic' young people from working class backgrounds and, this thesis argues, are part of a wider concern to regulate the labour market and young peoples' relationship to it, preparing them for sporadic participation in deskilled work (see Finn 1985, Pollert 1988).

From its initial policy statements BTEC has offered a justification for its courses which reflects this approach to changes in education, arguing that the success of British business depended on the skills of the general population who work in business (BEC 1977). In order to ensure that the courses offered reflect employers' demands, it has been a condition of a college being given approval to run a BTEC course that it should involve employers in the design and implementation of the course so as to ensure the "Realism and Relevance" of the courses (BTEC September 1986).

The assumption underlying this approach is that there is (or should be) a clear functional relationship between education and the economy. The assumption is that the purpose of education is to develop the skills which are demanded by the economic system and which will allow students to become productive members of the workforce. Those who argue that there is such a relationship are proponents of a "Human Capital" approach to Education (see Becker 1964, Denison 1964, Schultz 1977, Finegold & Soskice 1988, and contemporary policy statements from all political



parties). Such commentators see technological developments in the economy as demanding increased levels of education among the workforce if they are to be able to perform the "upskilled" jobs created.

On the other side of the debate are those who see jobs which use new technology as demanding a low-skilled workforce, needing only the ability to perform routine and predictable tasks with a minimum of supervision (Wilkinson 1983, Crompton & Jones 1984). Those who hold such a view see the purpose of many vocational courses as being concerned with regulating young peoples' aspirations and their relationship with work rather than equipping them with complex competences - one of the traditional meanings attached to the term 'skill'.

The concept of 'skill' is central to the discussion of the relationship between education and the economy. Reference has already been made to the argument that perceived skill shortages were responsible for the increased influence of employers in educational matters; lack of skills among young people leaving school was one explanation of the rise in youth unemployment in the late 1970s and early 1980s; finally, one of the most significant differences between BTEC and the business studies courses which they replaced was the significance attached to 'problem solving skills'.

It is argued in this thesis that the origins of BTEC business studies courses can be traced to changes in the economy; in particular to changes in the nature of the skills demanded of clerical workers. The next section focuses on the nature of the BTEC curriculum and uses concepts drawn from the work of Bernstein to analyse the relationship between changes in the nature of skills and some features of that curriculum.

### Skills and the BTEC Curriculum

In the foreword to the first policy statement issued by BEC (one of the two institutions from which BTEC was formed) the Chair of BEC began by saying:

"We have repeatedly asked ourselves - what is Business Education? It is not just a series of parcels of knowledge to be acquired haphazardly until enough parcels have been accumulated to justify an award."(BEC 20/1/76)

This statement indicates the intention that the curriculum of the courses should not be what Bernstein calls the "Collection type" which is associated with traditional academic qualifications. In the collection curriculum the learner has to collect a series of unrelated bodies of knowledge (Science, History, Maths) which are valued in and for themselves. (Bernstein 1980) Rather, the policy statement goes on to indicate that the curriculum should be an "Integrated type" (ibid.) where knowledge is not divided up into academic subjects standing in a closed relationship to each other, but is drawn upon as necessary in order to solve business problems.

Bernstein suggests that underlying the movement towards an integrated curriculum may be :

"Changes in the division of labour [which] are creating a different concept of skill. The in-built obsolescence of whole varieties of skills reduces the significance of context-tied operations and increases the significance of general principles from which a range of diverse operations may be derived." (Bernstein 1980)

The design of BTEC courses represents a movement from education in depth to education in breadth (cf. Bernstein 1980). Given the influence of employers in the design of such courses this would seem to indicate a change in the skills demanded of their potential workforce which reflects changes in the division of labour in clerical work which this thesis argues

has been facilitated by the application of new technology to clerical work.

### Curriculum and Chips

Chapter 5 argues that the major influence on the design of BTEC business studies courses has been the potential and actual changes in office work brought about by the development of new office technologies using micro-electronics. It is argued that the changes in the nature of work made possible by new technology have increased the pressure for changes in courses at secondary level (e.g. TVEI) which reflect many of the principles developed first by BTEC. New technology has been used to produce a number of changes in the economy generally and in the office in particular (see, for example, Armour 1986). It has been used to reduce the life cycle of many products with an associated dynamism in product markets. This in turn has consequential changes in the nature of many jobs and has brought about a change in the expectations of life-long employment for individuals and of full-employment of the entire labour force<sup>[3]</sup>. BTEC courses were originally being developed when the potential effects of these changes in the economy were being reflected in official and unofficial ideologies about work in the future (see for example Hines & Searle 1979). Those responsible for the design of the courses are unlikely to have been unaffected by these ideologies given their responsibility for developing courses to meet the perceived needs of commerce and of students at work in the near future. More emphatically, extracts from material held in BTEC's archives (discussed in chapter 5) indicate that such ideas were important in determining the design of the courses.

Within BTEC's Publications there is constant reference to the importance of preparing students to accept change and developments in technology. One of the unusual features of BTEC courses was the specification of four

'Central Themes' which were to permeate all aspects of a course. These have subsequently been reduced to three 'Cross Course' themes of which Technology and Change are two. Money, which also appeared in the original course specification remains as the third. The importance of this aspect of BTEC courses needs to be seen in the context of the debates about the contemporary and future organisation of work.

These debates are reflected in chapter 4, which discusses the nature of 'skill' and clerical skills in particular. The chapter argues that the design of BTEC courses represents an intervention to create the conditions necessary for the operation of an external labour market (Doeringer and Piore 1971) for clerical workers. Previously the individual nature of clerical operations in each firm has meant that an individual's career has been largely within the confines of that firm (see Lockwood 1969, Crompton and Jones 1984, Gill 1985) - clerical skills have therefore been non-transferable to a large extent. The potential for the "deskilling" (Braverman 1974) of office occupations made possible by new technology has made the creation of an external labour market possible by incorporating skills into machinery and requiring only generalised transferable skills from office workers.

While the changes in the organisation of work made possible the creation of an external labour market these changes were necessary but not sufficient conditions for such a market. The actions of employers have in the past militated against the creation of such a market: while employers have called for an increased emphasis on generalisable vocational skills in the curriculum they continue to recruit for prestigious posts from among workers who hold traditional academic qualifications (Watts 1983). Further when employers are asked about the skills which their workers

would need in the future they seem to bear a remarkable similarity to those which workers currently use(see BTEC/NCVQ 1991). A major claim of the thesis, made in Chapter 3, is that an attempt has been made by the State to use the FE system to facilitate the creation of an idealised liberalised labour market in which the barriers to the free movement of labour have been removed. State intervention has been necessary given the inability of the market itself to produce such an outcome. The role of the state in attempting to advance the interests of employers in general in a way which individual employers are not able to do is discussed in Chapter 3. The mechanisms through which this attempt has been made are initiatives such as BTEC courses, Youth Training Schemes (YTS) and the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) - although the original conception of the latter has been modified as the employers who dominate the NCVQ have produced statements about job-specific skills rather than the transferable skills which were envisaged. (TES 24/5/91)

Thus far the discussion has been of the intentions underlying the design of BTEC business studies courses; the question remains how far these intentions have been achieved and this requires an examination of the ways in which the courses are interpreted and experienced in FE colleges.

### FURTHER EDUCATION AND WORK

FE is facing powerful demands to respond to the demands of industry: through changes in course contents, through changes in funding mechanisms such the establishment of Training and Enterprise Councils, and also through changes introduced in the 1988 Education Reform Act and the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act. The combined effects of this legislation is to remove colleges from LEA control and give local business representatives the dominant representation in the governing bodies of FE

colleges. However, we should be clear that there is no automatic stimulus/response mechanism for translating the needs of industry into college courses in any simple sense and that any proper account of the industry/education relationship must examine day-to-day practices within FE colleges.

The successful achievement of the intentions of the designers of courses depends upon the actions of staff and students in colleges; their intentions and purposes are not necessarily the same as those of the designers. They may seek to achieve other goals through their participation in courses. Furthermore the ideological perspectives of the designers of such courses, who are committed to an "employer-led" approach to course design, create structures which do not necessarily guarantee the success of their enterprise. BTEC is one of the first examples of the attempt to create tight central control whilst emphasising local discretion - an ideological conjuring trick which can be seen at work in many aspects of social policy inspired by the New Right. The emphasis on the development of materials at local level in response to local 'needs' gives scope for teachers to be creative in their work (with reference to TVEI see Harland 1988). The difficulties faced by local employers in specifying their needs, and their concern with short term profit problems rather than the long term restructuring of the labour market can offer the opportunity for teachers to exploit the contradictions inherent in such policies for their own purposes. The thesis should not be seen as offering an over optimistic "Possibilitarian" (Sarup 1978, Apple 1985) view of the radical potential of such courses - part 2 of this thesis shows many of the practices adopted by FE teachers in resisting the changes sought by BTEC to be reactionary rather than progressive.

The existence of such resistance by teachers raises questions about the appropriateness of the stimulus/response model, particularly as in the colleges investigated, the teachers who were most likely to reject the demands of BTEC courses were those who saw themselves as most 'businesslike'. The analysis of the response of teachers to the changes in BTEC courses draws further on concepts derived from Bernstein's (1980) work. Bernstein suggests that one significant feature of the traditional academic (collection) curriculum is that it acts to socialise the student (and hence the teacher) into a subject identity. Any attempt to move from a collection code to an integrated one challenges the subject identity of the teacher and may be experienced as a challenge her/his authority. These propositions seem to offer some insight into much of the hostility and scepticism expressed by teachers towards BTEC courses. Chapter 6 explores the extent to which such resistance may be due to the threat teachers feel posed towards their position as experts by these courses.

Chapters 6 to 8 draw upon the results of interviews conducted with teachers in two colleges of FE and assesses the effects on teachers in colleges of the development of BTEC Courses and the reaction of students to some of these developments. In undertaking this analysis the thesis attempts to establish the views which teachers have about the nature and purposes of their work and its relationship to the 'needs' of industry, and the opportunity for oppositional practices. The views which teachers have about their work are not presented as being a sufficient explanation of the relationship which is central to the research problem. Therefore the thesis offers an analysis which places these views in a wider structural framework:

"It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being but, on the contrary their social being that determines their consciousness" (Marx 1968)

Any attempt to offer a thorough account of the relationship between FE and Work must examine the views of students of their motivation for entering, and their reaction to, their experiences on their courses. Chapter 9 presents an analysis of the interviews conducted with students in one FE college. It presents evidence which suggests that the model of students presented in much theorising of the education/industry relationship is an over-socialised one which understates the agency of students themselves in reproducing the social relations of production.

### Conclusion

This chapter has indicated the nature of the issues which are to be addressed in the remainder of the thesis.

It has been argued that the features of BTEC courses reflect many of the assumptions of 'The new vocationalism' (Bates et. al. 1984 Dale 1985, Moore 1988). These are that traditional 'academic knowledge' was at best inappropriate in preparing young people for employment and at worst promoted an anti-industrial spirit which caused young people to undervalue industry as a career (Weiner 1981). Secondly, that employers were demanding increasing levels of skill among young recruits and that traditional education was failing to meet these increased demands. Thirdly, that the remedy for these deficiencies in the school system was a series of courses which were based upon the 'New FEU pedagogy' (Dale 1985). This demanded that teachers should adopt student centred styles of teaching and learning based on integrated practical activities rather than the study of traditional subjects and which emphasised 'problem solving' rather than the study of a subject as an end in itself.

The assumptions which underlie the design of BTEC courses are those



which are addressed in the remainder of this thesis. They arise out of the central questions of 'What is the relationship between the economic and education systems?' and 'How is this relationship manifested in the educational policies of BTEC and day to day practices in FE?' This thesis argues that changes in the pattern of vocational education, such as those associated with BTEC courses, are part of a wider political agenda for reform of the labour market. The elements of this agenda are examined in chapter 3. The next chapter discusses the methodological issues which have been addressed in approaching the issues which this thesis examines.

## Notes

1. The term 'Vocational education' is used throughout the thesis to refer to the range of courses which do not lead to a recognised qualification examined by a professional body. Thus the term includes initiatives such as TVEI, and courses such as CPVE as well as the courses validated by BTEC. It does not include courses such as those examined by the Chartered Institute of Bankers and the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators or any of the other bodies which examine courses frequently offered in FE colleges. The latter type of courses are referred as 'Professional Courses' or a similar rubric.
2. Three further initiatives: i) The creation of the National Council for vocational qualifications, ii) The development of General Vocational Qualifications promises and iii) The removal of FE colleges from Local Education Authority control arising out of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 promise to have an equally significant effect in the future. The implications of these developments are discussed at a number of points in this thesis.
3. See note 2 to Chapter 4.

## CHAPTER 2

### METHODOLOGY

#### INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the methodological issues which have been addressed in the preparation of this thesis. It describes the nature of the problem which was studied in terms of the relationship between practices in FE and the demands of 'the economy' and it is argued that a case study was the most appropriate method of addressing this problem. The chapter describes the variety of methods used to gather data and the relationship between the methods used. The issues of validity and reliability in case study research are examined. The debates in social science over the use of case study methods, in particular the methodological concerns about the validity of generalising from case study findings, are examined and related to the findings of this study. Finally the chapter addresses the relationship between the use of ethnographic accounts and the 'structural' perspective which informs the thesis as a whole.

#### The Case Study Problem

The case study at the heart of this thesis has aimed to produce evidence concerning the relationship between day to day practices in FE colleges and the 'requirements' of the economic structure. The author's first appointment in teaching was in the Business Studies Department of a Technical College; this appointment coincided with the introduction of courses validated by the Business Education Council (BEC) and subsequently the author has been involved with teaching on BTEC courses. The demands of the courses validated by BEC were for student

centred approaches to teaching and learning with an emphasis on the processes of learning and of problem solving. At the same time that other sections of the school system were subject to a phase of reaction against "progressive methods" - alleged to be failing to meet the needs of industry - BEC was designing courses which specified the adoption of those methods as necessary to meet the needs of industry. It was the author's difficulty in reconciling the demands of these courses to a general theoretical analysis of the relationship between education and industry which prompted the research on which this thesis is based. Courses which were represented as being designed to meet the needs of industry were based on the methods which were criticised in other sectors of education as being inappropriate to industry's needs.

Study for previous qualifications taken by the author had produced an understanding of the relationship between education and the economy which was influenced by writers who adopted a Marxist analysis such as Bowles and Gintis (1976) and Althusser (1972). These writers adopted an implicit 'systems' approach (Easton 1965) which treated the education system as a 'black box' in which the demands of the economic system were translated into outputs - students who are fitted to the 'needs' of the economic system. Adopting such an analysis meant that the everyday practices of teachers and students in the Black Box were ignored as such practices were seen as being determined by the 'needs' of the economic system. The author's experience of the demands of BTEC courses led him to question the ways in which those demands were related to the needs of industry.

The research findings presented here form a case study of the ways in which the 'demands' of the economy are practically articulated and

responded to by the various actors in the education system. The problem which the thesis sets out to address is the nature of the relationship between the education system and the economic system. This has involved addressing the pressures to respond more directly to market forces to which FE has been subjected; the way in which this is manifested in the policy of BTEC as an organisation and the consequences of these policies for the teaching and learning experienced by staff and students in colleges. The thesis examines the ways in which BTEC courses may be said to prepare young people for a place in the workforce and the way in which teachers and students in FE colleges react to and reconcile the differing demands placed upon them by the courses and their own perceptions of their roles. The thesis examines the underlying aims of the designers of BTEC courses and the ways in which these aims have been interpreted and acted upon by staff and students in the day to day practice within colleges of FE; such a project could best be undertaken through case study methods.

### Case Studies

Case studies focus on the processes within social units rather than the individuals who go to make up those units (Hakim 1987). Their focus is on the pattern of relationships within and between groups of individuals. Two features of the case study method - contextualism and holism (Bryman 1988) - made this method particularly appropriate for conducting this study. Contextualism is a commitment to explaining events within their social context; in this study the focus on the perceptions of the teachers and students whose day to day activities go to 'make up' the lived experience of a BTEC course allows the exploration of different versions of what to the outside observer seems to be a single phenomenon: a BTEC National course in business studies (cf. Burgess, 1983).

Holism is the commitment to study and offer explanations of social entities in their entirety, rather than focusing on one aspect of a social process. In this study the responses of staff and students to the demands of BTEC courses are related both to the origins and purposes of BTEC and also to the particular cultures within the two colleges where field work was undertaken.

The methods which have been used to gather data for this thesis have been primarily that of research in the archives of documents held by BTEC, together with scrutiny of more recent BTEC publications and the use of semi- structured interviews. The archive research covered the period from 1974 to 1984. The research involved scrutiny of the minutes of *BEC Council meetings* which included draft policy statements, the reports and minutes of working parties set up by BEC - principally the education policy working party and the Research and Development Committee, and the text of documents issued to employers, parents and students during the period. Research into later BTEC policy has been confined to study of the publications issued by BTEC in developing and promulgating policies to colleges, as well as the Annual reports issued in the period from the creation of BTEC to date.

The documentary research was undertaken in order to test an initial hypothesis that the design of BTEC courses was a response to the perceived changes in the nature of work brought about by the development of technology. This hypothesis preceded the data and did not arise out of it, it was not therefore grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Rather the hypothesis arose out of the general theoretical perspective which is held by the author. Such an approach is not uncommon in case study research. Many qualitative research projects are designed to

investigate social phenomena, such as the transmission of social inequality through the school system (for example Ball 1981, Lacey 1970), such projects rest upon problems which are not themselves capable of definition through qualitative studies (Bryman 1988).

The interviews which form the basis of the second part of the thesis were conducted with teachers, students and moderators, although one interview was conducted with a BTEC officer very early in the course of the study. Interviews were conducted with 6 teachers in Nash College, and 7 staff at Wyvern; the interview data was supplemented by field notes taken in staffrooms while waiting for staff to arrive for interview. In both colleges the staff interviewed were all of those who were responsible for the design and teaching of the Core of the course. In both colleges the core teams were to a certain extent self-selected, regarding themselves as 'generalists' rather than specialists in particular subject areas; this is not the traditional orientation of teachers in FE colleges (Cf. Venables 1967, Gleeson and Mardle 1980). The features of course design which led to the composition of these teams is discussed in chapter 7. Further investigation would be necessary to determine their representativeness of these teachers in terms of BTEC Business Studies teachers as a whole. 5 Moderators were interviewed, 2 of whom were members of the teaching staff at Nash and Wyvern Colleges.

Semi-structured interviews were undertaken so that the interviewer could guide the interview to cover issues defined a priori as important - for example teachers' and students' perceptions of why BTEC courses demanded an emphasis on 'skills' - as well as allowing the interviewee to develop themes which were important to them about the day to day practice of the courses. A case study which sets out to examine teachers'

and students' reactions must allow them scope to highlight and expand upon the dimensions of those reactions. The semi-structured interview allows the interchange between the two parties to take on a form approaching a conversation. (Burgess 1982) The areas defined by the interviewer as important were covered, although not necessarily as a result of a question asked by the interviewer. Similarly issues were not necessarily covered in a particular order as would be the case in a structured interview conducted with the use of a schedule. Teaching staff were interviewed using a range of questions covering their decision to enter teaching, through a discussion of their perceptions of the differences between BTEC courses and others on which they taught, to whether they felt that the energy devoted to BTEC courses had produced any differences in the courses. Given the close involvement of these teachers with BTEC courses the questions asked tended to produce answers reflecting similar concerns with skills, student centred learning and involvement of employers which all interviewees raised as significant.

16 full-time and 25 part-time students were interviewed from both years of the BTEC National course at Nash college. The size of the sample was determined by the willingness of students to be interviewed. As the students were all volunteers no attempt at ensuring their representativeness was possible. Nonetheless the 25 female and 16 male students who were interviewed approximated the gender balance of the courses at the college. The students were also drawn from a wide range of educational backgrounds. Part-time students were employed (or in YT contracts) in a variety of organisations: the methodological significance of this is that the similarities of view expressed by students cannot be accounted for by the similarities of their educational or work experiences. The interview data was transcribed and initially read through. Certain themes - such as the



perceived relevance of the courses and the view that the courses were 'not like school'- were identified as recurring and a grid for analysing the data was drawn up which was subsequently used to structure the data.

Additionally 68 students completed a questionnaire relating to the training which they had received for their current posts in order to test an initial hypothesis that in-house training was highly job-specific. In fact the results revealed that only three of the respondents received any form of in-house training: most were taught to do their jobs by the person who they took it over from or were left to 'get on with it' themselves.

Other methods, such as surveys of staff and students in a number of colleges might have produced much in the way of *quantitative* data about numbers of courses, and responses to predetermined questions. This data might have been analysed using statistical techniques to generate an overview of the responses in colleges across the country. The case study methods used here have produced *qualitative* data about the interpretation of their role by staff in two colleges and the responses of students to their course within one college. The intention has been to produce what Hakim (1987) calls the "worms eye view" rather than the bird's eye view produced by survey methods. The significant difference between quantitative and qualitative research may not be how far they approach the 'Natural Science' model of scientific enquiry but the type of question which they are suited to answer.

The strength of the case study is the validity of the material produced -the analysis of the case should provide sufficient detail for the results to be complete and believable accounts of the subjects' experiences and views (Hakim, 1987). Kitwood argues that the human element is essential to the

conduct of interviews and to the validity of the data produced: validity in interviews depends upon the ability of the interviewer to gain the confidence of the interviewee and to allow her/him to express views freely and openly. Yet considerations of reliability - how far the results would be replicated by different researchers - demand that the human element in the research process should be reduced (cited in Cohen & Mannion, 1989 p303). In the next section the related notions of validity and reliability are examined.

### VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY IN CASE STUDY RESEARCH

Reliability may be conceived as one aspect of validity - the external validity of the findings of the study - how far the results of the study can be generalised to other cases. Many criticisms of case study research take the 'problem' of generalisation as the major weakness of case studies. However, the emphasis on external validity can only be significant if the internal validity of the case is established: if the analysis of the particular case is not valid, there can be no question of the generalisability of its results.

Attempts to ensure the validity of the data produced in case study research, that is to reduce the possibility that the findings reflect the methods used to gather data, are often based upon 'Triangulation': the examination of social phenomena from a variety of perspectives in order to gain a more complete account. Triangulation commonly takes the form of data triangulation, where different research methods are used to gather information about the same phenomena, or subject triangulation where the accounts of more than one person about the same phenomenon are compared.

In this study triangulation has taken the form of the different accounts given of the purpose of BTEC business studies courses produced by BTEC itself, the teachers in Wyvern and Nash Colleges, and the students in Nash college. More than one method of collecting information has also been used: documentary analysis and semi- structured interviews. The results of this triangulation highlight the difficulties of describing BTEC business studies courses as a single phenomenon and indicate that there are multiple versions of the same course: each version reflecting the 'story' that each of the participants 'tell themselves about themselves' (see Inglis 1985). This clearly has implications for the generalisability of the findings of this research.

### GENERALISING FROM CASE STUDIES

If case studies are to contribute to the cumulative development of knowledge or of theoretical insight they must be developed into general frameworks of explanation (Atkinson & Delamont 1985). However, many criticisms of the case study as a method of conducting research in the social sciences question the possibility of generalising from what may be unrepresentative cases. These criticisms reflect the assumption, commonplace in natural science, of the unity of nature. The assumption is that it is possible to generalise only if the case study represents a single instance from a universe of such cases and what holds true for one case will therefore hold true for all such cases: the observation that one apple falls to earth is the basis for the generalisation that all apples will behave in the same way (cf. Popper, 1972). While such an assumption generally accepted in natural science it is not, with notable exceptions (e.g. Freud, Piaget), normally accepted in social science theorising (Bryman 1988, Platt 1988).

The underlying logic of such criticism is that the relationship between cases and general propositions is a statistical one: generalisations can only be made where there is an observed correlation between certain features of similar cases. Such logic is inadequate in describing the generation of theory; theory demands an explanation of the correlation and not a simple observation that the correlation exists. As Mitchell (1983) argues, the relationship between cases and generalisations is not statistical but 'logical'; the writer has to go beyond the observation of a correlation to offer a theoretical explanation of the observed common pattern of variation of characteristics. In evaluating such explanations the criterion is the plausibility of the theoretical link between characteristics. The plausibility of the theory depends on the body of knowledge which exists. To develop the example used previously, one can observe that every apple falls to earth, but the theory of gravitational attraction offers a plausible explanation of the phenomenon.

Such criticisms of case study results focus on only one use of case study research: the development of general propositions from a single case. There are other functions which case studies can perform, and for which they are used more frequently. These functions reflect the underlying concern with developing generalisations but also reflect the problem in social science in deciding what cases are the same on criteria which are relevant for the generalisation:

"The question is not whether [one can generalise from case studies] but *from* what one can reasonably generalise *to* what." (Platt 1988)

A single case study can demonstrate that certain features exist and may exist in similar cases. If such features are subsequently shown not to exist in other cases they remain in need of explanation when general propositions are formulated: their existence may be used to rebut universal

propositions. The representativeness of a particular case has no bearing on this function which is best performed by extreme or atypical cases. Furthermore a particular case may demonstrate that factors which are specific to that case were important to the results of the study and that analogous factors may also need to be taken into account in other cases (Platt 1988). These considerations will be most important in evaluating the contribution of this case study to the general body of knowledge concerning the relationship between education and the world of work.

The findings of the elements of this study which are concerned with the origins of BTEC courses offer the general proposition that the pedagogy demanded by BTEC and the Manpower Services Commission (MSC - now TEED) represents an attempt to facilitate the creation of an idealised labour market. This market is based upon the perceived demands of work transformed by new technology. The adequacy of this proposition must be judged in terms of the arguments surrounding the issues of 'work and skills' which are adduced in the thesis.

The general proposition relates to the intentions underlying the courses; an assessment of the extent to which these intentions are achieved in practice required study of BTEC in practice. The results of the second part of this study - BTEC in practice - do not offer general propositions about the responses of FE teachers to BTEC courses. Rather the differences noted in the practices of the staff in the two colleges observed and the rationalisations which were offered for those practices provide categories which must be accounted for in any general theory.

The findings of the second part of this study suggest *categories* of responses to the demands of BTEC courses by teachers in FE colleges.

These categories have been linked by explanations which are independent of the case study but which are based on existing theory. Thus, the concept of the 'Professional Ideology of Teachers' is presented as being important in the findings of this study. It is argued that the different professional ideologies shared by the teams of teachers in the two colleges studied were an important factor which need to be taken into account in explaining the response of staff in colleges to the demands of new curricula. Furthermore in terms of explaining the significance of the introduction of new pedagogies and styles of assessment attention has to be paid to the responses of students - they are after all intended to be influenced by the courses.

The study of the students at Nash college was undertaken in order to examine what appeared to be a deviant case - the accounts offered by the teachers at Nash college justified the courses which they offered in terms other than its vocational relevance. A study of the students at this college offered an opportunity to examine the influence exerted on students by the 'ethos' of the course they followed. The assumption in discussions of the vocationalisation of the curriculum is that students absorb the messages of such courses in a more or less undiluted form; this case offered an opportunity to examine the influence on students of the non-vocational values which were espoused by the staff at Nash college. The evidence to be presented in this study has shows that the responses of the students to their courses were not explicable in terms of the intentions of the course or indeed of the teachers who tried to influence them through their work. Rather these students were influenced by ideological messages about the nature and purpose of FE and Work derived from the wider environment in which they operated.

While the analysis presented in this thesis uses the accounts of teachers and students these are not taken as complete accounts of the significance of their participation in BTEC courses. The adoption of a case study approach to this problem does not imply that the account of the individuals in the study can be isolated from the social structure in which they are located.

### METHODOLOGICAL INDIVIDUALISM

The use of a case study in this thesis does not imply that explanation of the significance of the day to day practice of the participants in BTEC courses can be reduced to the accounts of those participants: an approach which Hakim (1987) calls 'Methodological Individualism'. The focus of case studies is on a social unit rather than on individuals. The case study examines the patterns of attitudes and related behaviour held by individuals within those units (Ibid.). In undertaking a case study the researcher does not necessarily accept that the accounts of the participants offer a complete explanation of social processes. Detailed knowledge of the particular sector of society is held by the participants, but that remains a partial account of the significance of the processes. This significance requires elaboration by the researcher (Giddens 1976). Further, to argue, as ethnomethodologists do, that social structure is a consequence of the ways in which we perceive social relations understates, at the very least, the power of certain classes, groups and authorities to impose their definition of reality on others. (Bernstein 1980a, Cohen and Mannion 1989) The research for this thesis examined the patterns of attitudes held by the teams of staff within Wyvern and Nash colleges and those held by students in Nash college. Throughout the thesis an attempt is made to relate the accounts offered by staff and students of their practices to the economic circumstances within which they are located.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined the methodological issues which have surrounded the preparation of this thesis. It has been argued that the features of the case study method have made this a suitable approach for the study of this particular problem. The intention of the case study has been to identify the intention underlying the development of the policies of BTEC as an organisation and to identify the responses of staff and students in colleges to the demands of BTEC as they perceive and experience them.. These policies have been set in the context of wider developments of policy towards the labour market through an analysis of underlying themes which permeate materials held in BTEC's archives. The views of staff and students concerning their perception of their role and their responses to the various demands which have been placed upon them in response to the development of courses have been gathered through the use of semi-structured interviews. In order to establish the significance of the findings of the study, the debates over the external validity of case study findings have been examined and evaluated. Finally, as the case study has argued that the intentions of BTEC policy is based upon a view of what the relationship between the economic system and the 'work' of colleges should be, the relationship between individual accounts of action and social structures has been examined.



## CHAPTER 3

### THE POLITICS OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

#### INTRODUCTION

This chapter takes up the issues set out at the end of chapter 1 and offers an analysis of vocational education in terms of the agenda of the 'New Right' for increasing the significance of the market in all areas of public policy. Developments in vocational education are analysed in terms of their intention to promote market forces in 2 areas: firstly, in the labour market: changes here are aimed at promoting an idealised version of the labour market, creating conditions which are more favourable to employers. This is intended to be achieved through changing the institutions in the labour market, such as trades unions, which are the subject of other aspects of public policy but also by affecting young peoples' orientation to work through schemes of education and training, such as those validated by BTEC. The second area is to reduce the influence of educational 'producer groups' and to increase that of employers. This objective can be clearly seen in BTEC's policies - it was noted in chapter 1 that colleges are required to show that they have consulted local employers in the design and development of plans to offer BTEC courses - and has been promoted by policies carried out initially by the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) and subsequently by other, employer led, bodies such as Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs). The chapter offers an analysis of the division of labour between the various organisations involved in the provision of Vocational education and argues that the demands of state institutions have been used as a surrogate for the demands of employers in order to promote changes in the labour market.

In presenting this analysis the chapter highlights similarities between various developments in vocational education such as YTS and BTEC. The argument is that these developments share common aspects which reflect an underlying intention to promote 'the market' and not that the various schemes share a common origin. It is acknowledged that YTS had a number of objectives which included responding to the immediate problem of youth unemployment but which also offered the opportunity to intervene in the operation of the labour market. BTEC courses were not a response to the 'crisis' of youth unemployment - their origins are discussed in chapter 5 - but nonetheless share a similar orientation towards the labour market.

The purpose of the chapter is to set out a general framework for analysing developments in vocational education and training which will be applied to the development of BTEC courses in the two chapters which follow it.

### THE VOCATIONAL IMPERATIVE

In 1976 the then Prime Minister James Callaghan initiated the so-called Great Debate about the purposes of education. The essence of the criticisms which prompted the 'Great Debate', which was the latest round in the "Recurring debate" about the relationship between schooling and industry (Reeder 1981), was given by Callaghan in his speech at Ruskin college:

"I am concerned on my journeys to find complaints from industry that new recruits from the schools sometimes do not have the skills to do the job that is required ... there is no virtue in producing well-adjusted members of society who are unemployed because they do not have the skills." (Callaghan 1976)

The Great Debate took place against a background of criticism of the education system by right wing individuals and groups, such as the

authors of the 'Black Papers', who were 'making the running' in educational politics (Johnson 1991). The Great Debate and the reforms to education which emerged in the decade which followed it marked a response to criticisms of the social democratic reforms which followed the second world war. These reforms, which were made in times of full employment, were later characterised as sacrificing standards in favour of experimentation with progressive methods and of promoting equality at the expense of excellence. Concerns about the increase in unemployment, particularly youth unemployment in the late seventies and early eighties arising out of recessions in the economy provided the ideological space in which critics of the post-war educational settlement could focus their attack (CCCS 1981).

Callaghan's launch of the Great Debate accepted the analysis of the problem offered in right wing criticisms of schooling. Young people were seen in this analysis as failing to gain employment as a result of the alleged failure of the school system to equip them with the skills demanded by employers. No detailed comment is made here about the accuracy of this explanation of the 'problem' of youth unemployment. However, research by Wakeham (1980), for the Department of Employment, and Raffe (1983) does not support such an explanation. Both researchers found that youth unemployment was a reflection of the reduction in general opportunities arising out of the recessions in the economy in the late 70's and early 80's.

Subsequently attempts have been made by the Government to strengthen the relationship between schooling and the economy through a range of measures, for example through the Technical and Vocational Educational Initiative (TVEI- now TVEE), the funding of the Schools Council industry

project (now the Schools Curriculum Industry Partnership), INDEL (Industry/Education links) schemes in many Local Education Authorities, the creation of the Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education, changes in the pattern of teacher education to enable future generations of teachers to make their teaching more 'relevant' to the world of employment and the promotion of economic awareness across the curriculum. Keith Joseph, then the Secretary of State for Education, indicated that the 1985 White Paper 'Better Schools' was an attempt by the Government to fit work related skills into full-time education. The primary importance attached to schooling as a preparation for work is apparent in all official pronouncements.

FE has also had to adapt in response to the criticisms levelled at the school system - the response to the 'failure' of the schools to equip young people with the necessary skills has been the creation of a number of Government schemes - for example Youth Training and Unified Vocational Preparation - which have introduced curricula based on notions of 'transferable skills' rather than on the delineation of bodies of knowledge to be transmitted by the teacher. This redefinition of the curriculum has brought with it officially approved pedagogies. These emphasise active learning, bringing changes in the role of teacher and student, with greater negotiation over what should be learned and changes in assessment practices. All of these features are major elements of the curricular changes introduced into both schools and colleges over the past two decades. In the field of business education, which is the main focus of this study, the creation of the Business Education Council was stated to be with the intention of raising the level of skill and competence of the individuals who "make British Business work" (BEC Winter 1979). BEC courses incorporated many of the features of the curriculum which were subsequently to become

commonplace in the demands made on schools.

The major political force driving the criticisms of the social democratic reforms in education which inspired these changes in the focus of education was the 'New Right' in British politics.

### THE NEW RIGHT

The new right consists of two main factions, the Neo-Liberals and the Neo-Conservatives (Green 1989, Ryan 1989). The neo-liberal faction, associated with groups such as the Institute of Economic Affairs, is committed to market forces as *The* way to solve all problems. The neo-liberals aim to introduce the 'discipline of the market' to all areas of social life. Where this is impossible, either because of immediate political or practical difficulties, then quasi market structures must be introduced, such as the introduction of incentives for competition over pupils into the arrangements for the funding of schools under the 1988 Education Reform Act, or for 'Internal Markets' within the NHS. Underlying these arrangements is the idea that there exist entrenched interests within the public sector which distorts the provision of services in favour of those interests and against the interests of consumers (Friedman & Friedman 1980). The influence of such ideas in the reform of further education can be judged by the comments of the chair of the FE employers forum in a keynote speech to principals and governors of FE colleges:

"The Treasury view is that colleges are being run for lecturers and they must be run for students... The DFE (Department for Education) is going to use PRP (performance related pay) to break the stranglehold of the educational establishment). (Ward, 1992)

The introduction of quasi market structures is seen as an, if not the most, important way of overcoming the entrenched interests of "disabling

professionalism" (Elcock 1983, Barr 1987). For the neo-liberals, relations between individuals are (or should be) determined by the market, the primary value for the neo-liberal is therefore 'Freedom' (Ball 1990, Hayek 1980, Johnson 1991a), interpreted in the negative sense of freedom from restraint in the market. In this analysis the state is a force to be regarded with suspicion, substituting its own preferences for that of individuals in the distribution of economic benefits. Hence the role of the state should be reduced to a minimum and should be tolerated only to the extent that it is necessary to dismantle existing restrictions on the operation of the free market. Such a view of the state is not necessarily shared by the other faction within New Right philosophy, the neo-conservatives.

For the neo-conservatives the strong state has an important role in ensuring the respect for authority and tradition. These values are necessary for the transmission of a common culture and sense of national identity which are seen as the important bonds holding communities together (Ball 1990, Johnson 1991a). The attack on the social democratic reforms in education to which Callaghan's speech was a response was inspired more by neo-conservative than neo-liberal analyses. While this attack was presented in terms of the failure of schooling to adequately prepare young people for the demands of work, there was an underlying concern with discipline and social order: two themes which recur in writings of neo-conservatives:

"We shall not improve the quality of education in this country until we return to a sense of purpose, continuity and authority in our general attitude to life and society." (Boyson, 1975 quoted in Johnson 1991)

The reforms of the education system which have been introduced were initially more clearly identifiable with the neo-liberal agenda. At Primary

and Secondary levels the introduction of open enrolments and publication of examination results at critical stages in a child's school career so that parents can exercise choice, and the reduction of power of LEAs through changes in the composition of governing bodies reflect the intention to introduce market forces through increasing the power of the 'consumers' of education. Other policy measures - the National Curriculum in schools and the establishment of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications - reflect the concerns of the neo-conservative elements in the New Right. In FE the changes which have been introduced have progressively become more market based, as described in the remainder of this chapter, although they have been imposed by the state rather than arising out of the demands of the market. The next section examines the nature of state intervention in vocational education.

### THE STATE AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

'State' is used in this chapter to refer to a series of publicly funded bodies, including, but not restricted to, the government. The term is used to encompass quangos such as BTEC and the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ), which are originally established with Public money but which are subsequently required to fund their own activities. There may be objections to including BTEC and NCVQ within the state sphere, but their position is analogous to that of the Nationalised Industries such as British Rail: while they are required to finance more of their activities from trading rather than subsidy still have their long term objectives established for them by the government of the day. The state in this analysis is a capitalist state - one which has a symbiotic relationship with the system of production rather than being a neutral instrument for resolving conflict between competing interests.<sup>[1]</sup>

The criticisms of schools and FE which underlay the creation of the MSC and the explicit commitments in policy statements to make schooling 'more relevant' to the needs of the economy were discussed above. These policy commitments arose out of the changed circumstances in the labour market which offered the opportunity to pursue the ideology of free market economics.

In the 1960's the expanding economy meant that the majority of school leavers faced few difficulties in finding work (Roberts 1984). The justification for schooling (Human Capital Theory) was based upon certain assumptions about the 'good life' expressed in terms of work, employment and consumption and which embodied the attitudes required of the workforce in an expanding capitalist economy (Esland and Cathcart 1981). While schooling was seen as meeting these assumptions, the actual practice of schooling was seen to be the province of 'professional' teachers and not the subject of widespread public debate. There was a willingness to tolerate debates within the education system about experimentation with new methods of teaching and a concern with the whole - not just the economic - person. Whether the new methods existed widely in practice is itself a matter of debate (see for example the cases of Risinghill and William Tyndale schools).

The economic recession which occurred in Britain in the 1970's meant that the underlying assumptions about the purpose of schooling as being the key to employment and economic well-being no longer corresponded with people's experience, when even well qualified young people could not get jobs. The ideological space created by the questions raised about the aims of schooling allowed these aims to be redefined in a way which could be presented as meeting the changed economic circumstances. The



practices of teachers and the effectiveness of the system of education and training were open to questioning in a way which had not been seen as legitimate while the system was seen as fulfilling its 'proper' role. The autonomy of the school system with its lack of explicit concern for the economic understanding of its pupils, which was now seen as central, could not be sustained. The consequence has been a breakdown in the assumptions about the unproblematic nature of the relationship between schools, FE and employment, and a struggle over the aims of schooling has ensued. This struggle has been premised upon the assumption that education and training both can and should be more closely aligned to the 'demands of industry'. The paradox is that the reforms which have been introduced bear little relevance to 'industry' as it is currently organised. The courses associated with the reforms do not emphasise traditional 'drilling' in vocational subjects but adopted many of the pedagogies associated with progressive education, whereas 'old fashioned' discipline might be a better reflection of the realities of work (Hartley 1987, Stronach 1989). Further, the emphasis on transferable skills which has been at the centre of the style of curriculum promoted by both BTEC and the MSC (and its successors) does not reflect employers practices. The costs of training and the long 'pay-back' associated with training means that firms have no incentive to train workers in transferable skills when those workers may be 'poached' by other firms (Lee et al. 1990). The MSC has acknowledged that

"left to themselves, individual firms will not undertake enough training fully to meet the needs of the economy for transferable skills"  
(MSC 1980)

A major problem in explaining developments of courses which proclaim to be more closely related to the 'world of work' is that the features of such courses are not vocational in any commonsense meaning of the term

(Bowe and Whitty 1989). This is because the courses are based upon an idealised view of what the labour market and the social relations of production should be rather than reflecting what they are. Any account of the changes to the organisation and content of courses in the name of increasing their vocational relevance must recognise the specifically political dimensions of such developments.

The emphasis on vocational relevance in all aspects of the education system represents the success of the New Right's attempts to introduce market forces into education in a number of senses. Firstly, to break the dominance of educational professionals and to make education more responsive to the 'market'; secondly, to introduce elements of privatisation into the education system. This second intention is promoted through the distribution of training credits which young people can 'cash in' at the college of their choice, through the creation of employer dominated Training and Education Councils to take a role in the planning of vocational education. Finally market forces are to be introduced so that education can be used to facilitate the removal of 'imperfections' in the labour market so that it can function 'effectively' in the future.

The underlying legitimation for changes in the curriculum of schools and colleges has been the creation of an idealised neo-liberal labour market where workers are equipped with skills useful to them in a range of occupations. In order to promote such changes which cannot be produced by the market itself the state has intervened in the market.

The philosophy underlying the various policies is that all problems are capable of solution if 'The Market' is allowed to operate without restraint; it must be noted that the model of the market on which these policies are

based is an entirely idealised model which does not exist outside of economics textbooks. For those accepting this philosophy there are reforms necessary in the labour market: action must be taken to remove all barriers and restrictive practices which prevent the free movement of labour from occupation to occupation.

A review of the publications of influential new right pressure groups such as the Centre for Policy Studies and the Institute of Economic Affairs offers a clear agenda for the reforms adopted by the government over the past decade and a half.

"While the obstacles and discouragements that prevent men and women from moving from decaying to growing firms and regions continue, we cannot tell how many would remain as the proportion of mobile labour that would emerge in a freely working economy. Until the government has removed the housing obstacle, the trade union obstacle, the minimum wage obstacle, the inflation stimulant to uneconomic employment, and the high tax rates that drive generally honest men and women underground, we shall never know." (Seldon 1982)

The targets of reform have been the trade unions, wages councils and, more importantly for the arguments in this thesis, the schools and FE colleges whose role has been redefined (see, for example, Miller 1981, Taylor 1986, Young 1987). The influence of such ideas in state policy is indicated in the 1985 White Paper 'Employment: The Challenge for the Nation'. This argued that high unemployment was attributable to the failure of the labour market "the weak link in our economy". Two main areas were identified for action: education and training and improving flexibility in the labour market. (Reported in the Times 29/3/85)

#### VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND THE IDEALISATION OF THE LABOUR MARKET

Elements of State policies towards education and training, such as YTS,

Elements of State policies towards education and training, such as YTS, were clearly a response to the increase in youth unemployment in the 1970's, but it would be a mistake to regard them simply as a palliative for short-term problems in the economy. The policies were part of a more radical strategy for change in the labour market and marked a decisive intervention in the labour market on behalf of capital by the state.

The policies which were developed reflected an intention to create a more flexible labour market in the future. Such policies have implications for the attitudes held by workers which may be affected by schemes of vocational education. The analysis which informs many areas of government policy towards the labour market (and vocational education is an element of such policy) is that there exist many 'imperfections' in the market which prevent it from operating properly. The perfect labour market from this perspective would be one in which individual workers confront individual employers as sellers and buyers of labour power, a commodity like any other. There should be no 'barriers to entry' preventing workers participating in the market or preventing them negotiating individual contracts with employers. It is within such a framework that we can understand the various changes to industrial relations law which have reduced the ability of trades unions to collectively organise labour either through the closed shop or through industrial action (or, in the neo-liberal analysis, to exercise monopoly power over the supply of labour - see Hayek 1980, Minford 1982). Ideally the commodity should be homogeneous and be able to be used for a variety of purposes; at worst the employer must have knowledge about the quality of the commodity on offer - the employer must be able to compare and evaluate the workers offering themselves on the market. The role of state policy is seen, in the neo-liberal analysis, to be the removal

of 'imperfections' and to enable the market to function correctly. The influence of such ideas in the design of BTEC courses is discussed in Chapter 5.

This prescription of the conditions necessary for the proper functioning of the labour market is reinforced by a view of the nature of work in the future. As the Editor of the Journal of Economic Affairs put it in 1982 many workers would have to, and would want to:

"move *en masse* into the 20th Century to improve their condition... Especially in rapidly changing technological conditions and where trade is determined by sudden political influences as well as by gradual trends, a percentage of the labour force - anything .. up to 5 million - will be changing its skills, jobs, firms and homes." (Seldon 1982).

Work in the future is seen to require greater adaptability to change on the part of the workforce, given the prospect of a much more dynamic market where workers are required to change jobs more frequently than has been the case in the past (MSC 1981). In this analysis, new technologies are seen as likely to make product markets more volatile and production processes more likely to change. Consequently new firms will be created to meet the demand for new products and others will be going out of business when the demand for their products declines. Ministers answer criticisms of the record number of bankruptcies in recent years as an indication of the Government's success in creating an entrepreneurial economy: the possibility of business failure is seen as just as important as success and bankruptcies are an indication that the market is working correctly. Firms in this Post-Fordist economy are seen as following the 'Flexible Firm' model (Atkinson 1986). Labour practices within such firms are seen as meaning that workers are less likely to be engaged in mass production but will require a number of skills (functional flexibility)

and will be unable to expect a pattern of lifelong employment with one firm as 'flexible firms' adjust their size in response to market fluctuations (numerical flexibility). The skills required by workers are therefore those useful to them in a range of jobs in different firms. The reality of such a model of the firm has been questioned by Pollert (1988) and Hyman (1988). Pollert comments on the significance of the role of the Institute for Manpower Studies, which is both one of the leading proponents of the flexible firm model, and has also been used by the MSC to investigate and promote the idea of transferable skills in Youth Training Schemes - she argues that the 'flexible firm' should be seen as a mediation between the private sector and Government employment policies.

The operation of such an idealised free market for goods and labour is seen to mean that workers must be willing and able to change jobs much more frequently than in the past, and to maintain their motivation and commitment to wage labour during periods out of work: the emphasis in vocational education must therefore be on the production of creative compliant workers to meet the needs of flexible firms (Buswell 1988, Cathcart and Esland 1985, Whitty 1988). Such workers must possess attitudes and abilities which will allow them to move easily between a variety of jobs in different firms and to accept the legitimacy of the market in calling them in and out of employment. Such concerns can be seen to inform the design of BEC and Subsequently BTEC courses:

"[T]he heaviest emphasis [in BEC Courses] is on the development of abilities which have a relevance in any field of business ... a logical an numerate approach to unfamiliar business problems and adaptability to changing circumstances." (BEC SPRING 1983)

BTEC courses and other state interventions in vocational education are based upon a common perspective on the operation of the labour market in

the future. The widespread acceptance, influence, and origins, of this perspective is evidenced by the then chancellor of the exchequer writing in a leading right wing journal:

"Adaptability and mobility are the preconditions for an efficient Labour market. And only efficient labour markets can provide tomorrow's jobs." (Howe, 1983)

State intervention through schemes of vocational education and training are part of a wider strategy for the reform of the labour market in the direction suggested by the neo-liberal analysis.

### LABOUR MARKET REFORMS

The elements of a longer term agenda for the reform of the labour market in the direction suggested by the analysis above were set out in the objectives for the New Training Initiative (NTI). The objectives for NTI were as follows:

1. The development of skill training to provide for agreed standards of competence, and access to jobs for workers of any age for workers who could achieve those standards. The emphasis should be on flexibility in the workforce, given the need to accept change and to develop new skills.
2. The provision of opportunities for all young people under the age of 18 to either continue in full-time education, enter in to training or undertake a programme of planned experience with work related training and education. The purpose of all such training or education being to enable young people to acquire competence and experience in a range of related jobs or generic skills to provide them with a foundation for progress in working life.

3. To open up opportunities for adults, whether in employment or not, to acquire, increase or update their skills and knowledge during the course of their working lives. (adapted from MSC 1981 pp 4-5)

The initial emphasis of the NTI was the Youth Training Scheme, which had a number of aims which included the "displacement" (Habermas 1976) of the source of the 'crisis' of youth unemployment from the economic to the school spheres; when the immediate threats to public order from youth unemployment was perceived as having been 'managed' by YTS and other measures, the state turned to the development of other policies to implement the remaining NTI objectives (numbers 1 & 3 in the list above). We should note the significance attached to the introduction of flexibility to the labour market in the NTI objectives, as this appears to be an important element which underlies the design and content of many initiatives in vocational education, including BTEC courses and is not just a feature of developments associated with NTI (See, for example, Wray et al. 1980 in relation to schemes of Unified Vocational Preparation).

A brief description of two developments in vocational education will serve to illustrate the attempts to use it to facilitate reform of the labour market in the direction described above. These are the pedagogy which vocational courses demand and the importance of providing public information about the achievement of students completing such courses.

The "New FEU pedagogy" (Dale 1985), which is prescribed for vocational courses in schools as well as FE, calls for strategies such as active learning, a learner-centred approach to the curriculum, an emphasis on the development of transferable skills and curricula defined in terms of



competences rather than the traditional concern with bodies of knowledge to be transmitted by the teacher. Such curricula put the emphasis on what the student can do rather than what the student (or teacher) knows. This type of curriculum has been criticised for cutting students off from bodies of abstract knowledge with which to elaborate a critical understanding of their position in society - although such criticism sits uneasily with the history of demands from working class groups for an education based on "Really Useful Knowledge" (Johnson 1981) which would help them to elaborate such a critical understanding; it presents school knowledge as a neutral tool, rather than bearing ideological messages. Shilling's (1989) work is a useful corrective to the view that vocational education takes place in a vacuum where students are cut off from the social realities of work and industry and that they consequently absorb the messages of vocational education uncritically. The criticism also has more relevance to schools than to the traditional curriculum in FE colleges; FE teachers have always adopted an instrumental view of knowledge (Venables 1967, Tipton 1973).

The real significance of the pedagogies demanded is that the content of learning is seen as largely immaterial - one commentator describes courses such as BTEC and CPVE as "Context- and content-free" (Fay 1988) - the courses are intended to develop generalised skills which will be useful in a variety of low level jobs in a number of firms: the skills and competences are not intended to be tied to one particular industrial or commercial setting, but are to be the possession of the trainee to be taken with her/him from one type of employment to another in a future of interrupted and intermittent employment dictated by the dynamic product markets envisaged in the future. Chapter 4 of this thesis will present evidence that clerical workers have traditionally been relatively immobile between firms

precisely because their skills and knowledge were developed in the context of 'on the job training' and were therefore not easily transferable. It is argued in the chapters that follow that changes to the training of clerical workers has been aimed at promoting and facilitating changes in the clerical labour market.

The 'Privatised' view of skills and competence in which workers are seen as being able to 'take their skills with them' finds its clearest expression in the work of the Institute for Manpower Studies' document 'Training for Skill Ownership' which attempts the ideological transformation of the wage earner into a capitalist in exactly the terms criticised by Karabel and Halsey:

"..[W]hat must be further remarked about the theory of human capital is the direct appeal to pro-capitalist ideological sentiment that resides in its insistence that the worker is a *holder of capital* (as embodied in his skills and knowledge) and that he has the *capacity to invest* (in himself). Thus in a single bold conceptual stroke the *wage earner*, who holds no property and controls neither the process nor the product of his labour is transformed into a *capitalist*." (Karabel and Halsey 1977)

The other aspect of developments in vocational courses which most clearly reflect an intention to facilitate an 'improved' labour market is the assessment of student progress. These increase the knowledge available to employers about the qualities of workers on the labour market - as Moore (1988) argues, vocational education is no longer concerned with providing students with knowledge about work, but increasingly reflects a concern to provide knowledge about students for work. This feature of vocational courses originated with the requirements for profiling of students' achievements - explicit statements about student performance in a number of vocationally relevant areas originally defined by the MSC - rather than a single examination grade. When Keith Joseph was Secretary of State for

Education he commented that the move towards profiling was important because profiles told employers what students could do rather than examination grades which only indicated what they couldn't. BTEC has not, until now, required a fully developed system of profiling but in order to move towards the assessment requirements for the new GNVQ (General National Vocational Qualification) students now have to compile a portfolio of the evidence for their achievements. Further, for students enrolling on courses since September 1991, colleges are required to produce a profile of 'Common Skills' for each student. Common skills are 'Common' in the sense that they have to be developed and assessed in all BTEC courses whether for Engineering, Catering or Business Studies, and are independent of the occupationally specific skills and knowledge which also has to be graded in the courses. BTEC clearly attaches great significance to providing information about the transferable skills which are seen as useful in virtually any kind of employment, anticipating the reform of the labour market in the direction discussed here, a theme which will be developed further in Chapter 5.

The development of competence based standards with access to jobs for workers of any age who could achieve those standards, as set out in the objectives for NTI, has been the focus of recent initiatives in FE.

Competence based access to jobs can be seen to have two aims: firstly to weaken the power of trade unions over job allocation. Historically unions have been able to exercise such power through the requirement that a job seeker should possess a union card or have completed an apprenticeship. In the neo-liberal analysis trade union power represents a monopoly over the supply of labour which impedes the free movement of workers between occupations. The second aim is to improve the knowledge of employers, allowing them to identify groups of workers with the requisite

abilities more easily. Both aims are essential elements in the strategy to make the labour market 'Perfect' in the neoclassical economic sense described earlier as being the basis of state policy. The concern to identify workers with the necessary competences for particular types of work has been further institutionalised in the establishment of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) in October 1986 which aims to develop

"Employment-led standards of competence [which] are agreed and recognised levels of vocational competence - skills, knowledge, understanding and ability in application - needed to perform a task, a job or range of jobs normally in a specified group of occupations, sector of industry or commerce, or profession."  
(NCVQ 1987)

The aim is to develop a system whereby every vocational qualification can be rated against established criteria for assessing their level, from Level 1 which includes the ability to perform certain work activities within time constraints to specified standards under supervision and in a restricted range of working conditions, to level 5 where the holder has competence at professional level (NCVQ 1987). The work of the NCVQ represents both one stage in the privatisation of FE and an assault on the right of teachers to determine and assess standards. NVQs are statements of work competences and as such may be assessed in work; indeed they are expected to be (BTEC/NCVQ 1991). The standard of performance which is to be assessed are decided upon by 'Industry Lead Bodies', which consist of employers representatives. The competences can be assessed by employers as their employees go about their everyday duties and employers are therefore relieved of the expense of off the job training and their dependence on FE colleges for the certification of their employees.

It is worth noting at this point that although the NCVQ is formally

concerned with reviewing and rationalising the framework of vocational qualifications the real focus of its activities is the individuals who hold those qualifications. Competence statements describe what an individual can do, and say very little about the type of qualification held - a NVQ level 2 in Business Administration demands exactly the same competences whether it is awarded by BTEC, the RSA or based upon the assessment of work practices - and the work of the NCVQ should be seen as a means of classifying workers, not qualifications. A fully developed scheme of relating qualifications to competences would allow an employer more easily to identify and compare the abilities of various employees who present themselves for work. The aim initially was to improve the employer's knowledge of the 'commodities' presented on the labour market and to allow a more rational choice so that the market works more effectively. Nonetheless, the NCVQ has adopted an approach to its work which is at odds with the original intentions, focusing on the demands of present day jobs rather than transferable skills (Finegold et al. 1990). The NCVQ's approach to vocational courses has brought it into conflict with that of BTEC - this conflict is discussed later in this chapter.

Changes in vocational education were intended to become a method not only of reproducing the existing structure of relations of production by producing a wage labour force equipped with certain skills and knowledge, but also with facilitating the transformation of the labour market in which those relations find their most practical expression. The existing nature of these relations, with resistance on the part of the working class to the attempts of capital to take full control of the labour process through means such as 'restrictive practices', represents what is seen as an unwarranted restriction on the process of capital accumulation. One of the consequences of a right wing government, with very clear

views about the 'proper' functioning of the labour market in an entrepreneurial economy, has been the use of the vocational education as one of the agencies employed to engineer change.

The ways in which the state has recently intervened in FE in order to promote change is examined in the next section.

### STATE INTERVENTION IN FE

Further Education is the area of the education system in which the relationship between education and the economy has traditionally been the most explicit. Although, as the relatively small number of studies which have been conducted of the practice of FE have shown, the relationship of FE colleges to local industries is not a simple or mechanistic one. The pattern of courses on offer at colleges represents a negotiated settlement between the interests of local employers and the interests of the college in offering a range of 'high status' courses. These produce a greater income for the college as a whole and (until 1990) increased the promotion chances for individual lecturers and the potential salary of managerial staff in colleges (Tipton 1973, Gleeson and Mardle 1980).

Furthermore, as Lander observes, the assumption that FE serves the needs of industry in any direct way has to account for the facts that a) the state has never implemented the advice given by its own bodies concerning FE; b) the majority of employers take no interest in the provision of education and training, and c) that there is no agreement about what the relationship between education and training should be among those responsible for its provision (Lander 1984). Such an observation adds further weight to the rejection of a simple characterisation of the FE/industry relationship, the reasons for which are discussed below.

Local Education Authorities (LEA's) have historically been responsible for the provision of Work Related FE (WRFE) in colleges. The reforms introduced by the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act remove FE colleges from LEA control and grants them independent charitable status. In future, colleges will receive the majority of their funding from the newly created Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). The FEFC is funded centrally from the DFE and its budget reflects aspects of government policy. £50 Million of the FEFC's revenue budget for 1993/94 is to be withheld to ensure that the 1.5% public sector pay limit, announced in the 1992 Autumn financial statement, is observed. Further, the expressed target of increasing by 25% the number of students enrolled in FE is to be achieved by a 16% increase in the budget available to the FE colleges (O'Connor 1993). The increase in student numbers is to be achieved through 'efficiency savings', promoted by the incentives within new funding arrangements for colleges to compete for students (DFE 1992). The intention to promote a market model of the further education sector is clear - competition is seen as driving down the costs of provision, expressed in neutral tones of "increasing efficiency" (Ibid). Other features of the funding of FE reflect the intention to use colleges as an arm of central government policy.

From 1985, responsibility for 25% of the budget for WRFE was given to the Employment Department (ED) (exercised through MSC and its successor TEED - the Training, Enterprise and Education Division). This responsibility was transferred to the TECs (discussed below) from 1st April 1992 - presumably as a consequence of the creation of the FEFC which will dominate the funding of FE and be an influential arm of central government policy. Initially these bodies were free to 'go to the market' and 'purchase' provision from either Public or Private Sector institutions,

but now the funding is 'ring-fenced' to public sector FE colleges (Employment Department 1992) . The allocation of responsibility to bodies outside of the LEA for funding WRFE was a way of making colleges more responsive. The question that is raised is more responsive to whom? The major impact of the changes has been the subjection of LEA's and colleges to the discipline of state bodies rather than of the market directly; LEA's have been required to undertake planning exercises to satisfy the DE's requirements (exercised through its surrogates the MSC, TEED and the TECs) covering matters such as detailing planned admissions for courses, actual admissions, the reasons for any divergence between plan and outcomes, and successful completion levels accompanied by an explanation of low success rates. As Harland (1987) points out, the responsibility for 25% of the funding of WRFE has been used to demand 100% review and co-ordination of LEA provision of WRFE.

The criticism which underlay this policy was clearly stated in the National Economic Development Office (NEDO) report "Education and Industry" and echoed in the 1984 White Paper "Training for Jobs". It was argued that Local Authorities were not aware of, or responding to, the 'needs' of the economy. The decentralisation of decisions about the funding of vocational education to LEA's meant that industry lacked any effective influence in such decisions. The obstacles to change identified in the NEDO report included the by now familiar arguments that the education system was dominated by an academic orientation, fostered by exam boards and teachers, and protected by the independence of LEAs from intervention by government or industry (quoted in Mason 1988). One of the obstacles to change which was noted in the report is particularly significant for the arguments in this thesis. This was that employers had



no way of making their requirements known to the education system other than through 'Market Demand': employers continued to offer the highest salaries to the products of the education system who had "Academic" qualifications while insisting that what they wanted was school/ college leavers with vocational qualifications. The criticism here is essentially the same as that made by critics of the Market as an allocator of resources, that the Market is concerned only with short term interests and not with the longer term, which requires some kind of 'extra-market' structure. This structure was the Employment Department (ED).

The power given to the ED through the MSC and its successors was a manifestation of the contradictions of Conservative government policy which proclaims itself to be concerned with the rolling back of the state and increasing the power of the consumer (in this case the consumer of FE is seen as employers) whilst actually presiding over the most powerful and intrusive state apparatus giving central control and direction of the FE system. The reforms brought about by the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act increase still further the power of central government over the provision of FE. Direct control over the funding of 94% of FE funding through the FEFC means that government can shape the character of FE provision much more directly than was the case in the past. The transfer of the budgetary responsibility for the remaining 6% of FE funding to the TECs (Employment Department, 1992) allows the government to demonstrate its commitment to increasing the power of employers in FE. Nonetheless the power of the TECs is closely circumscribed: the 'strategic guidance' they receive from the Secretary of State for Employment and the President of the Board of Trade (DTI 1992) lays out a detailed requirement for the 'Business Plan' which each local TEC must develop. It is significant that guidance for the TECs about the

strategy for work related *further education* does not come from the Department for Education, but from those parts of government concerned with the labour market. This lends support to the general argument of this chapter that FE is part of the government's strategy for reform of the labour market.

The contradictions inherent in government policy can be understood in terms of the two conflicting factions of 'New Right' philosophy: neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism. The neo-liberal wing of the new right has been prepared to tolerate the influence of the ED as long as it was seen to have the long term objective of reducing the power of educational 'producer groups' - LEA's and teachers - even if this was at the immediate expense of increasing the influence of employers. The difficulties of maintaining the corporatist structure of the MSC and the purposes to which the power which it exercised was put are discussed below, but first other attempts to increase the influence of employers in the provision of vocational courses are examined.

The process of using state sponsored bodies to promote the interests of employers has been clearly observable in the development of BTEC as an institution. Conscious changes have been made to the structure of committees and boards which go to make up BTEC in order to increase the power of the state and employers and to reduce the opportunities for teachers to participate in the development of policy. BEC and TEC as separate bodies (prior to 1984) had a series of 'Programme Committees' which undertook the bulk of the detailed work on courses; both organisations also had education committees which played a key role in policy making. All of these bodies contained representatives from colleges including practising teachers. Prior to the creation of BTEC, the

chief executive designate of the new body announced his intention that BTEC would abolish both the education and programme committees (TES 10/6/83). Subsequently the education committee has been replaced with an advisory education liaison committee which comprises representatives of other validating and examining bodies and which offers advice about the implications of BTEC policy for those other bodies. The programme committees have been replaced by Advisory boards for the various subject areas - e.g. Business & Finance & Public Administration, Agricultural Subjects, Construction, etc. - who are nominated by colleges, Local Authorities and Private Sector firms. The college representatives on these boards are almost uniformly drawn from the management structure, rather than the practising teachers who were included in the programme committees, but they are also in a minority and seem to be excluded from the chair. Appointments to the Council of BTEC - the ultimate policy making body - are approved by the Department for Education and the body has an overwhelming majority in favour of employers as against college representatives. Both the Council and the Advisory Boards have 'Assessors' appointed to them. These assessors are representatives of a small number of Government Departments - principally the DFE (and the Scottish and Northern Irish Education Departments), Department of Trade and Industry, and the Employment Department - rather than being concerned with assessing students, as the title might imply, they are concerned with the operation of the committees themselves. The role of the assessors is described by BTEC as being that of observers at committee meetings who have a very small input to proceedings - presumably to ensure that BTEC is aware of the latest government thinking about vocational education. Their presence, and the role of the DFE in appointing members of BTEC's Council, at the very least raises the possibility of explaining the similarities between BTEC courses and

the general direction and content of state policy towards vocational education at all levels of the curriculum as the result of a conscious and concerted intervention by the state.

There have been structural changes aimed at increasing the power of employers in the provision of vocational education. 120 Local Employer Networks (LENs) were created in a two year period ending in September 1988, and 100 Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) announced in the White Paper 'Employment In The 1990s' have been created. Both of these structures are intended to increase the influence of employers in the planning, content and delivery of Vocational Education and Training (VET). For example, LENs were given a number of objectives including the provision of labour market information for the VET planning process coordinated by the MSC and the provision of the machinery through which employers could influence the education and training curriculum, especially that of TVEI. (Mason 1988, Wright 1989). TECs are independent bodies set up by the Employment Department, and funded by it, which have taken over executive responsibility for organising the delivery of Youth Training and Employment Training. As noted above, they have also taken over responsibility for the budget for WRFE - previously undertaken by the Employment Department.

The influence of employers in the work of colleges has been further strengthened through the creation of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ). If qualifications are to be accredited by NCVQ then they must meet the specifications of competence defined by employers for each standard. While the NCVQ defines competence as involving the application of skills, knowledge and understanding, the concern is that specifying standards in terms of occupational competence

with work place assessment will mean that the qualifications will emphasise the application of skill, at the expense of understanding the reasons why tasks are performed (Gleeson 1989, Whitty 1988) with significant implications for the practices of staff and students in colleges.

The changes in BTEC curricula necessary for the courses to receive validation by the NCVQ have removed many of the educational opportunities which the courses presented in their original form. For example, in Nash college - which is one of the colleges in which the field work for this thesis was undertaken - the students followed a course composed of a series of blocks which dealt with their rights as consumers and as employees. The latter section dealing with Trade Unions in the work place and Equal Opportunities practice. The modification of BTEC courses necessary to gain validation by NCVQ focuses on the immediate demands of students' (although this term seems a misnomer) day-to-day practice in an office, but does not deal with the wider context of those practices. The revised specification of BTEC First courses for Business Studies (BTEC/NCVQ 1991) indicate that Trade Unions and equal opportunities practices are not to feature as anything other than passing references. The statement of the competences required of young people following the courses reflects a clear view of the future working lives of the students who 'achieve' the standards required. The NCVQ competence statements portray students following orders, responding to problems defined by others while performing mundane and routine clerical tasks and never as active problem solvers. These 'students' are not required to examine why they perform certain tasks or to consider alternative methods of achieving the desired outcome; they apparently do not need to identify problems or seek their causes. Rather they need to be able to keep their desks tidy, open letters safely, follow instructions, and

(of course) answer the telephone.

The Further Education Unit (FEU) recognises the importance of changing the performance of staff in colleges, reiterating the argument made earlier that one of the aims of policy has been to reduce the influence of FE teachers in vocational education:

"Work by the DES, MSC and others, including the FEU, seeks to persuade the FE system to become more flexible with respect to its testing provision, more precise with respect to its learning outcomes, more predictive with respect to transfer and more comprehensive with respect to recording the achievements of its learners." (FEU 1986)

There has always existed a degree of cooperation between (the then) MSC, the Department of Employment and NCVQ: many of the professional staff who undertook the development work for NCVQ were seconded from the Department of Employment and 6 out of the 13 original NCVQ Council members had represented the MSC in one capacity or another (NCVQ n.d.). It would not seem unreasonable to extrapolate to include the NCVQ, the argument made by Cantor & Roberts that the origins of the MSC in the Department of Employment has led its officials to take the view that it should judge its activities by industrial rather than educational criteria (Cantor & Roberts 1986).

There exists a division of labour in the provision of VET between LENS, TECs and TEED but the intention to increase the influence of employers is clearly marked, and finds its practical expression in the work of the NCVQ. The precise division of responsibilities is worth reflecting on further. LENS are given the responsibility for providing information and stimulating private sector involvement in VET planning, which is predominantly concerned with the 'Tactics' of vocational education. The

planning horizon is relatively short term and reflects a concern with employers' current training needs. TECs are concerned with the execution of Government labour market policy initiatives - Youth and Employment Training - although 'Strategic' responsibility for the design of these programmes and others concerned with the long term shape of the labour market rests with Government sponsored agencies removed from the immediate demands of the labour market, The Employment Department and the NCVQ.

This division of labour can be related to the earlier discussion of the role of the state. The state has taken on the strategic role of attempting to reform the labour market through its intervention in schemes of VET, and the establishment of NCVQ. The design of these schemes is removed from the immediate concerns of the labour market as it actually exists. The intention is to facilitate the creation of an idealised labour market in the future where workers equipped with certified transferable skills and competences can be identified by employers. Intervention by the state is, therefore, intended to reflect and promote what is seen as the needs of employers rather than their short term demands. The role given to employers representatives reflects much more short term concerns with current training needs.

The division of labour which exists also reflects the characterisation of state policy as being the outcome of negotiation and concessions to various class fractions and cautions against any functionalistic view of state activity. The corporatist nature of the MSC's role in pursuing the objectives set out for the NTI could only be sustained while the threat to stability posed by unemployment (particularly youth unemployment) was perceived as great. In such circumstances the necessity for state action is

accepted by employers and the state emphasises the sense of its policies as a method of overcoming or at least quieting objections. When the threat to social stability is perceived to be receding, then differences over the future direction of state policy begin to reappear and policy reflects these changed circumstances. Consequently the functions of the MSC have been reallocated in the fashion described, so that a greater role has been provided for employers representatives (although the machinery for their involvement is state sponsored). For example, cuts in the funding of training policies have been defended by Government Ministers on the grounds of reductions in unemployment (Robert Jackson, Radio 4 interview 20/8/90) as it becomes difficult for a right wing government to maintain support among the competing interests which it represents for large scale state intervention except in times of crisis. Bowe & Whitty (1989) provide further illustration of the emergence of division over the nature of state policy by pointing out the divisions in attitudes towards the pedagogy of vocational courses which have been welcomed by some employers but which are regarded with hostility by others (the "Industrial Trainers" - Williams 1961) who suspect that the new initiatives may be being hi-jacked by progressive elements among the "Public Educators" (ibid.). There are similar divisions within the government, reflecting the changing influence of neo-liberal and neo-conservative ideologues. Such divisions have been manifested in the scepticism with which coursework in GCSE courses has been regarded and the subsequent reduction in the maximum contribution to examination grades to be derived from such coursework.

There is an apparent confusion over the direction of state education policy where the type of courses which are designed to meet the needs of employers in the future - TVEI, CPVE, BTEC etc. - are based upon areas



of studies, problem solving etc. Such features conflict with the requirements of the 1988 Education Reform Act which reflects concerns with a curriculum composed of traditional subjects, based on a grammar school model and which are more closely associated with neo-conservative concerns with 'standards'. Forbes and Miller (1988) in an article entitled "What should employers ask of the education system?" set out a series of demands which essentially reflect the "New FEU Pedagogy" (Dale 1985) but which goes on to note that these demands are not being met by the changes in recent government policy such as the National curriculum. The details of education policy cannot be read off from the 'requirements of the economy'. Education policy represents a compromise between conflicting demands (Ball 1990).

While the state may set out policies for reforming the labour market through vocational education and training such intentions are not easily achieved. The closing of ranks over state policy which takes place when social stability is threatened cannot be sustained when a crisis is seen as subsiding and the concessions which the state must make in order to maintain its legitimacy produce policies which cannot be easily related to an overall plan. Furthermore the delivery of state policy depends upon human agents who have their own objectives, in the case of vocational education these agents are teachers in schools and colleges who themselves are engaged in a labour process through which they attempt to establish and promote those objectives. Finally the 'subjects' of state policy do not necessarily willingly and uncritically accept the aims of policy. Students in schools and colleges have a range of motivations for following vocational courses and interpret the messages of the courses in the light of their own understanding. The chapters which form the second part of this thesis examine the reactions of some of the students and teachers involved

in the day to day practice of business studies courses in FE colleges and seeks to illustrate the ways in which the requirements of BTEC courses were interpreted and responded to by teachers and students.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has argued that current developments in vocational education reflect an intervention by the state to bring about an idealised labour market which is seen to be in the long term interests of employers rather than meeting short term concerns with training for current jobs.

Throughout the chapter reference has been made to various features of BTEC courses, the purpose has been to show that these courses can best be understood as part of a wider state strategy for reform of the labour market. The arguments made in this chapter, concerning the use of vocational education as an element of state policy for reform of the labour market, provide a context for those advanced in the following two chapters.

The focus of this thesis is the relationship between changes in the nature and organisation of clerical work and the design of BTEC courses which, it is argued, reflect an intention to facilitate changes in the clerical labour market. Chapter 5 analyses the origins and nature of BTEC business studies courses. It is argued there that such courses reflect a desire to promote the interests of employers by facilitating the development of a clerical labour market. The purpose of Chapter 4 is to develop an analysis of changes in the nature of work made possible by the application of 'New Technology' to clerical work. It is argued that the use of such technology has brought about a change in the 'skills' required for clerical work. These changes in skill requirements have made possible changes in the clerical labour market, which have parallels in the analysis of the neo-

classical labour market described in this chapter. Chapter 4 highlights the implications for the education and training of clerical workers of the changes in the skill requirements of clerical work and the desire to promote changes in the clerical labour market.

## Notes

1. The state is a capitalist state because there is a symbiotic relationship between the state and the system of production. The state depends upon the system of commodity production for its existence because finance for the state's activities comes from taxes on the profits created by the exchange of commodities in the market. Capitalism depends on the state in order to reproduce the conditions of capitalist production - the conditions of reproduction (Marx 1977, Holloway and Piciotto 1978) - because the contradictory nature of capitalist production threatens the basis of its own continued existence.

The motive force of capitalism is capital accumulation - a process in which the capitalist exploitation of labour power produces profits. The logic of capitalist production is to increase profits either by reducing costs, including that of labour, or by increasing output. Marx illustrates the process with the historical example of attempts to increase output by lengthening the working day. This practice resulted in weakness, ill-health and early death among the working class, the availability and productivity of which is the foundation of profits in the first place. Thus the attempt to increase output, and through this the level of profits, was contradictory because it tended to destroy the working class on which the creation of output and profit depended.

Individual capitalists were powerless to reverse the process - failure on the part of an individual firm to compete with others who were reducing costs would simply result in that firm going out of business: the individual capitalist experiences the laws of capitalist production as a coercive and external force. (Marx 1977)

The state intervened, after pressure from both the working class and employers, to restrict the tendency to increase the length of the working day by imposing maximum working hours. It is worth noting here that the state in this analysis is not simply a tool of the ruling class, through which they can achieve their interests in an unproblematic way; rather it is a site of struggle in which the working class has achieved some gains (McLennan 1984) and in which the competing demands of various fractions of capital - e.g. manufacturing and finance capital (Ingham 1985) - are resolved (Jessop 1982). State policy reflects the inconsistencies and variety which arise out of the contestation which takes place in the state sphere; the state needs to respond to powerful interest groups in order to maintain their allegiance. The nature of the state's response will reflect the relative strengths of the class fractions making demands on the state at a particular point in time; the limits of its response are determined by the state's need to preserve the opportunity for capital accumulation, given the state's dependence on taxation derived from commodity production and exchange for its continued existence. State policy therefore cannot be simply 'read off' from the requirements of the economy, but exhibits a degree of autonomy from practices in the economy: the state is relatively autonomous (Apple 1985, Reynolds 1984, Fritzell 1987)

## CHAPTER 4

### SKILLS AND THE CLERICAL LABOUR MARKET

#### INTRODUCTION

It was argued in the previous Chapter that one of the purposes of recent state policy for vocational education is the attempt to promote reforms in the labour market. These reforms are inspired by the attempt to bring about an idealised neo-classical labour market which anticipates the requirements of employers in the future. This chapter relates an analysis of the changes in clerical work to the purpose of BTEC courses; these are presented as a specific case of the general analysis offered in Chapter 3, being concerned with the promotion of an external clerical labour market. This chapter sets out an analysis of the implications for the clerical labour market of the introduction of micro-electronic (new) technology into office work. It is argued that changes to the nature of the skills demanded by clerical work makes possible the creation of an external clerical labour market. Such a labour market has not previously existed because the 'firm-specific' skills which clerical workers have possessed have made such a system, which depends upon the existence of generalised skills, impossible. The possibility of such a labour market arises out of the changed skill requirements of clerical work subjected to technological change.

The discussion in the chapter is set within the framework of Braverman's (1974) analysis of the tendency inherent within capitalist organisations to deskill work as the central strategy of management control. The chapter is concerned to evaluate criticisms of Braverman's thesis as it applies to

clerical work. Discussion of such criticisms, both theoretical and empirical, provide an opportunity to examine the meaning of 'skill' which is central to the justification offered for vocational courses.

In order to examine the issues raised and to show the inter-relationship between them the chapter begins with an outline of the debate about the 'deskilling' of work as part of the development of the Capitalist Labour Process, focusing on the importance of new technology for the process of deskilling. The key features of clerical work will be outlined and the suitability of this type of work to the introduction of new technology will be discussed. The evidence about the effects of new technology on clerical work and the skills necessary for this kind of work will be examined and finally the implications of these themes for the design of vocational courses will be discussed.

### THE DESKILLING DEBATE

Interest in labour process theory was rekindled by the publication in 1974 of Braverman's book 'Labor and Monopoly Capital: the degradation of work in the twentieth century'. Braverman argued, following Marx's analysis of the labour process under capitalist conditions, that Employers purchase labour power, that is the capacity to work:

"...What the worker sells and what the capitalist buys, is not an agreed amount of labour but the power over an agreed period of time."  
(Braverman 1974:54)

The function of management is to transform labour power into labour. In order to achieve this effectively employers must take control of the labour process, so that the conditions under which labour takes place are dictated by Capital in terms of the content, pace and pattern of working.

The importance of control of the labour process is summed up by Braverman as follows:

"Workers who are controlled only by general orders and discipline are not adequately controlled, because they retain their grip on actual processes of labour ... (and) they will thwart efforts to realise the full potential in their labour power. To change this situation control over the labour process must pass into the hands of Management, not only in a formal sense but by the control and dictation of the process, including its mode of performance."  
(Braverman 1974:100)

The ultimate expression of Management's attempt to control the labour process is, Braverman argues, 'Scientific Management', a system developed by the management theorist F.W. Taylor (and which is referred to as Taylorism). The essential nature of Taylorism is the separation of the conception and the execution of any work task, a phenomenon which is often referred to as the divorce of mental from manual labour.

Managements using Taylorist assumptions design work in a way which allows them to gain control over the labour process; organising work in ways which removes the opportunity for the workforce to understand the total process of production and limiting opportunities for them to exercise any discretion. This monopoly of knowledge about the labour process allows management to break the production process down into its component parts and to introduce a division of labour into the process, with different workers performing only one stage in the process - in formal terms, to substitute detail for complex labour.

The benefits of such detailed division of labour to Capital are not only the reduced costs of production due to the opportunities that are provided for the mechanisation of production. Mechanisation allows employment of less skilled and hence lower paid workers to perform the simple tasks associated with each stage of production. Most importantly, Braverman



argues, the separation of conception from execution allows management to take control of the labour process. The intention is to reduce the ability of workers to control their level of output by varying the amount of effort they expend, as the pattern and pace of their work is dictated to them. Such effective control necessitates the destruction of those skills which give workers the ability to resist the direction of Management, and it is this tendency to deskill which constitutes 'the degradation of work' that is the subtitle of Braverman's book.

Braverman's arguments have been widely criticised in the academic debate which followed its publication: the most stringent criticisms having been made by other writers in the Marxist tradition. Not all such criticisms are dealt with in this chapter<sup>[1]</sup> but some of the main ones are outlined in the discussion of clerical work in the sections which follow.

### THE CLERICAL LABOUR MARKET

Braverman offers a schematic account of the tendency of deskilling in clerical work and other service jobs compared to the detailed analysis of work in manufacturing industries. Braverman's argument is that the introduction of Mechanisation and Automation into the office has meant that most clerical workers are:

".. subjected to routines more or less mechanised according to current possibilities that strip them of their former grasp of even a limited amount of office information, divest them of the need or ability to understand and decide.." (Braverman 1974:340)

Braverman has been criticised for comparing the contemporary organisation of work with some assumed 'golden age' of craft production; whereas in clerical work (as in many other types of production) it is argued that work has never been organised in this way. The debate concerning the deskilling of clerical workers reveals two conflicting views about the skill requirements of clerical workers. On the one hand there are commentators who argue that clerical work has never been skilled but, in large part, routine and lacking any substantial discretion (Rajan 1984, Webster 1990). Such accounts of clerical work see it as consisting of repetitive operations which are controlled by written procedures.

On the other hand there are those commentators who see clerical workers as exercising a large measure of autonomy in their work and possessing some technical knowledge. For example, Lockwood argues that much clerical work is non-repetitive, requiring a degree of responsibility and individual judgement. (Lockwood 1969)

The exact nature of the skills required in the performance of clerical work is nowhere clearly specified. Indeed Lockwood argues that, given the individual nature of the tasks performed in each office, clerical 'skills' were specific to the firm in which the individual developed them and of little use to any other. (see also Gill 1985) The clerk

".[D]efinitely acquired skills, but it was difficult to say exactly what they were, or to compare them with those of other clerks.  
(Lockwood 1969)

The training of clerical workers has traditionally reflected the firm-specific nature of skills, such training has been essentially 'sitting next to nellie'. A questionnaire conducted as part of the research for this study found that of 68 clerical workers surveyed only 3 had attended training courses directly related to the demands of their jobs; the remainder had

been either shown how to do the job by their predecessor or had simply been 'thrown in at the deep end' and left to find out for themselves. Lane, in a study of clerical work and training in the German Federal Republic and Britain, compares the certified, formal, on- and off-the-job system of training in Germany with the job-specific, non-certified on the job training which is dominant in Britain. At the end of her/his apprenticeship the German clerk possesses a qualification which is recognised and accepted across a range of industries, whereas in Britain clerical workers have traditionally received a narrow range of firm-specific competences with no general applicability. Where a system of post-entry professional training has existed (in the Banking sector), a 'no-poaching' agreement between employers has limited the opportunities for staff to take advantage of the value of their qualification by using it in the external labour market. (Lane 1987)

Significantly for the arguments advanced in the next chapter of this thesis, Lane identifies BTEC courses as an exception to the general rule that vocational courses impart a narrow range of skills and describes them as offering a complete (clerical) occupational training with value in the labour market.(ibid.) Courses validated by BTEC are identified as an important movement away from narrow job-related training towards the certification of transferable clerical skills. It is argued below that this change reflects an intention to bring about change in the nature of the clerical labour market.

Given the traditional, firm-specific nature of the clerk's skills, Lockwood argues that there has never been a general labour market for clerical workers. Their employment, he argues (and Lane's analysis above supports this argument), arises out of personal contact and their intention

is to remain in one firm for their whole working life and to move up through the hierarchy of that firm (Ibid.) - a situation which later theorists have categorised as a 'Firm Internal Labour Market' (Crompton and Sanderson 1990, Hakim 1990). Internal labour markets exist within a productive unit (Firm, Office, Factory etc.) where wages and the distribution of jobs are determined by a system of administrative rules and procedures. (Doeringer and Piore 1971) The internal labour market is connected to the external labour market by a series of jobs which act as points of access to and exit from the internal labour market. Other jobs within the internal labour market are filled by promotion of workers who have already gained access to the market and they are consequently protected from competition from workers in the external labour market. In the external labour market it is economic variables such as the supply of and demand for different types of labour which affects the level of wages and numbers employed.

The identification of dual (i.e. Internal and external) labour markets was developed in later research which identified a number of different labour markets in which workers were differentiated in a variety of ways - gender, age, ethnicity etc. This has led many commentators to criticise Braverman's conception of 'Deskilling' as the only strategy used by capital to exercise control over the workforce. Such criticisms are important for an understanding of the traditional organisation of the clerical labour market and the classification of clerical work as 'skilled non-manual'.

Radical labour market theorists argued that resistance by the workforce to the strategy of simple deskilling has historically prompted employers to seek alternative strategies of control based upon division of the workforce.

These theorists argued that employers divide their workers into the categories of 'Core' and 'Peripheral' workers; Core workers being those who are highly skilled whereas Peripheral workers are unskilled. The employment conditions enjoyed by these workers reflect their status within the firm, the tasks performed by peripheral workers are subject to the deskilling described by Braverman and are subjected to direct control by supervisors; workers in this sector having little security of employment. Core workers on the other hand are seen as possessing skills which are essential to the organisation and which employers seek to retain through the device of an internal labour market. This type of labour market serves to link the future of the employee with that of the firm, by rewarding with promotion those workers who internalise the norms of the organisation (Friedman 1977, Edwards 1979). The internal labour market is an adaptation to 'firm-specific' skills as Doeringer and Piore (1971) suggest, but it also serves to implement control of the workforce by rewarding the development and exercise of the type of behaviour and characteristics conducive to the smooth operation of the enterprise.

The internal labour market for clerical workers has advantages for both workers and employers arising out of the 'firm-specific' nature of clerical skills. Given such a situation employers need to maintain a stable workforce to reduce training costs and to capitalise on the experience and job specific expertise of clerical workers. Clerical workers themselves also require stable employment prospects given the likely costs to them of changing jobs consequent on the difficulties of transferring their skills and experience to another employer. As outlined above, an effective strategy for achieving this stability of employment is through the device of an internal labour market which ties the interest of the individual worker to that of the firm, through the promise of mobility through the career

structure of the firm (Goldthorpe 1980, Stewart et al. 1980). The training arrangements reflect the organisation of the labour market, with on-the-job training being the dominant mode. Formal qualifications are significant only in initial recruitment with such qualifications being unrelated to the demands of the job, but taken as indicators of the suitability of (particularly young) people for clerical work (Ashton et al. 1987, Lee et al. 1990). Such a labour market represents a compromise between the needs of capital and labour and should not be seen as being imposed on the workforce; within the framework of a competitive labour market it reflects their interests. (cf. Hyman 1988)

Internal labour markets perform a number of functions which serve to diffuse conflict between management and workers and increase the level of conflict between workers themselves. A simple strategy of deskilling is argued to be undesirable from the employer's perspective as it displaces conflict from an individual level to the level of an organisation as a whole, by creating a uniform workforce subject to similar pressure from employers and which looks to collective action to resist that pressure (Edwards 1979). The concentration of competition for promotion within the firm tends to generate competition between workers; it also tends to diffuse conflict between management and workers by providing an incentive for co-operative (desirable) behaviour on the part of the workforce. The operation of the internal labour market tends to promote a view of the interests of workers as that of individuals in conflict with other individuals rather than as members of one class in conflict with another (Burawoy 1982).

The primary strategy for the control of core workers has been, it is argued, one of 'Bureaucratic control'. The institutionalising of rewards is

central to the successful operation of Bureaucratic control, rewarding 'proper' behaviour (which tends to be reliability and associated characteristics) increases the employees' opportunity for mobility within the firm, binding their future to that of the firm and produces more 'appropriate' (from the point of view of the firm) behaviour:

"[W]hat distinguishes Bureaucratic control from other systems of control is that it contains the incentives aimed at evoking the behaviour necessary to make Bureaucratic control succeed. It is the *indirect path to the intensification of work through the mechanism of rewarding behaviour relevant to the control system, rather than simply to the work itself, that imposes new behaviour requirements on workers.*" (Edwards 1979)

Chapter 8 of this thesis argues that the system of penalties and rewards which are included in the design of the BTEC Business Studies course at one of the colleges studied reflects a high degree of bureaucratic control as success depends upon behaviour which is relevant to the control system and not simply on the quality of work produced.

The existence of firm-specific clerical skills offers an explanation for what has been called the 'Skill Fiction' (Crompton & Jones 1984) in relation to clerical work. Historically the designation of clerical work as skilled depended on the clerk's monopoly of the once scarce ability to read and write. However the spread of literacy to the wider population through the development of a universal system of education undermined the ability of clerical workers to maintain their privileged market position. Although the pay of clerical workers has declined in relation to that of manual workers (Hyman 1980, Lane 1988), employers have not taken full advantage of the opportunities offered to them by the spread of literacy to reduce clerical wages. Employers themselves continue to support the 'Skill Fiction' surrounding clerical work by recruiting their clerical

workforce from amongst those qualified to 'O' level standard. (Ashton et al. 1987)

One reason for such a strategy on the part of employers could be the degree of resistance to the removal of their skilled status by the clerical workforce. However the evidence does not seem to support such an analysis (Crompton & Jones 1984) and we need to look for other reasons. Part of the answer might be the use by employers of educational criteria as indicators of the possession of desirable attitudes and dispositions (Bourdieu 1977, Collins 1979, Tarsh 1990) which are important in developing and reinforcing divisions within the workforce while maintaining the clerical worker's identification with the managerial function. The evidence presented in Chapter 9 will show that the clerical workers interviewed in the course of their college studies saw themselves as potential managers and interpreted their course as a preparation for management whereas evidence from studies of the reorganisation of clerical work tends to show that clerical jobs have become "dead-end by design" (Applebaum & Albin 1989) removing the career structure into management for clerical workers.

The 'Skill Fiction' might not have been maintained by employers if there had been any method of introducing technical control of the workforce, if, that is, the skills necessary for clerical workers were widely distributed across an external labour market. However, as described below, the potential for deskilling or systems of technical control is greatly enhanced through the development of new technology which makes possible the creation of an external labour market for clerical workers. The creation of such a market allows for a new system of vocational training for clerical workers; the existing system which focused on narrow job-specific



competences reflected the existence of an internal labour market (Lane 1987). If the potential for the creation of an external labour market offered by new technology is to be realised then new arrangements for vocational training emphasising the development of transferable skills must be put into place. There is a disincentive for employers to provide training in transferable skills as they may not recoup the costs of training as workers are able to transfer their skills to other employers (Lee 1989). In such circumstances intervention by the state is necessary to stabilise the provision of transferable skills (Marsden 1986). The product of such intervention has been the creation of the types of courses validated by BTEC, which, the analysis in chapter 5 argues, are premised upon the need to equip young people with transferable skills. The change to the organisation of the labour market also produces changed requirements in the attitudes demanded of clerical workers. Whereas traditionally systems of bureaucratic control have encouraged the development of appropriate attitudes within the office, the creation of an external labour market for clerical workers means that new control strategies can be adopted by employers. The assumptions which underlie bureaucratic control are that workers will progress through the hierarchy of a particular firm and the knowledge and experience which they develop become increasingly valuable to that firm; the control structures therefore are intended to tie the interests of the individual worker to that of the firm. In an external labour market the assumption is that workers are largely interchangeable units in a production process and possess transferable skills which can be used in a variety of settings. In such a labour market different control strategies operate and different attitudes are required on the part of workers. BTEC and other vocational courses are based on the development of certain attitudes towards participation in the labour market which can be summed up as a 'willingness to accept change'. Such an

attitude is often referred to as one of the '*Skills*' which vocational courses aim at developing; as indicated in this extract from a speech by Kenneth Baker, then Secretary of State for Education, in February 1989:

"There are a number of skills - and I am using that word in its broadest sense - which young people and adults in future will need. They could be expressed as a list of core skills - in say, the following :.... Familiarity with change in working and social contexts...." (quoted in County of Avon 1989)

BTEC courses attach particular significance to the treatment of 'Change'.

Since the earliest BEC courses the theme of dealing with and responding to change has been the one area which has survived all of the changes to the specifications of Business Studies courses - the latest specification for BTEC National courses includes a core module entitled 'Innovation and Change' (BTEC April 1992). This is because BTEC courses, in common with other vocational courses, are intended to alter young peoples attitudes to the participation in the labour market and to change their relationship with it. A detailed discussion of this aspect of BTEC courses is taken up in Chapter 5, currently the intention is to demonstrate the changes to the organisation of clerical work which makes the changes to the labour market possible and which underlie the design of BTEC courses. The next section examines the potential for the reorganisation of clerical work using new technologies and the changes to the clerical labour market which are consequent upon those changes.

### CLERICAL WORK AND NEW TECHNOLOGY

"Information technology is basically a technology of co-ordination and control of the labour force, the white collar workers Taylorian Organisation does not cover." (Managing Director of Olivetti (quoted in Huws (1982))

Information technology can be differentiated from the 'traditional' electro-mechanical and mechanical devices used previously in all sectors of

production because of the capacity of the technology to process complex information and thus to be used to exercise control over production processes. Some commentators propose that the title 'Control Technology' should be substituted for the more usual 'Information Technology' as the purpose for which information is utilised is generally to exercise control in some way (Buchanan & Boddy 1983). It is this 'control' function which has meant that many studies of the impact of new technology have been undertaken with a view to evaluating the 'deskilling debate'.

It is a commonplace of the literature concerning the nature of clerical work that this type of employment is a heterogeneous category. However, it is possible to identify a number of features common to all clerical work which make it readily adaptable to the introduction of new technology. Principally the work consists of a flow of information necessary to effect a number of purposes which vary with the 'business' of various offices. The information flowing through the office has certain characteristics which make it suitable for computerisation. The information tends to obey predictable rules, therefore the procedure for dealing with it can be written down and exercised independently of individual discretion (this is not to say that individual clerks did not/ do not exercise some discretion in their work, rather, if we follow Braverman's analysis, this may be an element of control of the labour process that may be removed from the majority of the workforce and concentrated in hands of a few managerial staff). The sheer bulk of information handled has meant that 'manual' systems of recording the essential details have had to be developed - these systems mean that the information is often highly structured, in this sense computerisation represents a development of existing trends in office procedure. Finally the results of the procedures followed are often

common to a number of organisations (e.g. all branches of the clearing banks need to maintain customer accounts & to clear cheques; most trading organisations need to compile VAT returns, accounts etc.) although the manual procedures used to produce these results may be quite different, particularly in small organisations. (Wainwright & Francis 1984, Roessner et al. 1985)

Wainwright and Francis (1984) argue that these features of clerical work - the repetitive nature of the work and the wide market for any programs produced makes it easy to develop programs and reduce their market price for each buyer - have meant that the work has tended to be subjected to automation in recent years. To these factors must be added the falling cost of computerised office systems and the historical undercapitalisation of clerical workers. The TUC pointed out that in the late 1970's the average capital investment for a typical office worker was £500, compared with £5000 for a typical industrial worker (Trades Union Congress 1979)

The 'paperless office' which was widely predicted in the 1970's when the potential for new technology to transform work of all types was becoming apparent has not yet appeared. (Armour 1986, Harris et al. 1989) There are a number of reasons why this is the case ranging from the expense during the periodic recessions of the 1980's, to the preference of many managers for maintaining traditional methods which preserve their authority and prerogatives. (Kling & Iacono 1989, Oppenheimer 1985) Both Hyman (1988) and Lane (1988) report that there is not necessarily a clearly articulated managerial strategy which underlies the adoption of new technology and that even decisions such as computerisation of office procedures which may have strategic consequences may be reactive and owe as much to considerations of office politics and careerism among

managers as to a clearly developed policy in relation to deskilling. However, Lane's review of empirical studies of new technology in offices presents evidence that it was in those sectors with low levels of automation of clerical work where a conscious strategy was absent (Ibid.).

To date the most widely adopted programs have been applications packages (Spreadsheets, Databases, Wordprocessing Packages) which can then be tailored to meet the needs of particular tasks within offices. Larger organisations (such as Banks and Insurance Companies) have been able to commission 'dedicated' programs written specifically for their own organisation. Studies of the clerical labour process have mainly taken place in the larger organisations, both because of the ease of access to such organisations and also because in these organisations the technology has been used to alter the way in which work is organised. In the smaller organisations, (although not exclusively there - see Bowen 1989, Harris et al. 1989) paper-based systems tend to have been translated into computer-based systems without fundamentally altering the system of working. It is the potential offered by the technology to management to alter the system of working - the division of labour - which marks its importance as a technology of control (Webster 1990). The possibility of integrating previously separate stages in the division of labour in all types of offices is made possible by the latest office technologies which combine computing power with telecommunications. Electronic Data Interchange systems represent the latest developments allowing the transmission of data between computers whether in the same office or across the globe (Matthews 1990). It is argued in chapter 5 that the design of BTEC courses which emphasise the 'skills' of using Information Technology and adapting to change reflect the potential for reorganising clerical labour processes and the clerical labour market made possible by new

technology.

The effect of such technologies which allow a greater degree of computing power to be brought to bear on a wider range of applications than ever before is being and will be felt in all aspects of production. There are two widely held and diverging views of the consequences of the introduction of new technology into clerical work: the optimistic scenario predicts that new technology will be used to remove the mundane and routine features of clerical work and allowing those who are engaged in such work to undertake more creative activities (see Bird 1980). This optimistic perspective can be seen to inform recent analyses of the labour market which have sought to evaluate the 'Flexible Firm' hypothesis. This hypothesis suggests that firms seek both functional and numerical flexibility - that is they attempt to use their equipment and labour force for a variety of different tasks (functional flexibility) and they seek the ability to quickly adjust the number of workers used in order to respond to changes in demand for their product (numerical flexibility) (Wood 1989). For many commentators adopting this perspective, new technologies are seen as offering workers more interesting and varied jobs within a flexible system of working and demanding enhanced levels of skills.

The pessimistic scenario views the likely consequence of the use of new technology in the office as the creation of a range of simple routine and standard tasks. The removal of discretion and control of their work from clerical workers which this implies amounts to deskilling in the classic Bravermanesque sense: new technology offers the opportunity to overcome the obstacle to the deskilling of office work - the control of information by clerical workers and their ability to make decisions based upon this (Braverman 1974).

Crompton and Jones provide a useful example of the opportunities offered to management to use computers to take over human skills in their case study of an Insurance company (called 'Lifeco' by the authors):

"..[A] systems review (with a view to further mechanisation) in Lifeco noted as one of its recommendations that 'every effort should be made to utilise the knowledge and expertise of the OB claims clerk before she retires' - but her knowledge will be transferred, not to a new generation of clerks, but to the computerised system itself" (Crompton and Jones 1984)

While it is clear that the technology has great potential for achieving savings in costs by reducing the time taken to process information, the technology itself does not determine the consequences for the skills of the people using it. Insurance companies have introduced automatic handling of policies (Lamborghini 1982). The systems introduced can, in some cases, expedite business between the outlying offices of an Insurance company and its brokers by providing for the automatic composition and printing of policy documents in the office itself. This has had the effect of reducing dramatically the time taken to issue a policy - in one example the period was reduced from 3 weeks to 3 minutes (West 1982 quoting evidence from ASTMS). However, this automatic transmission of information does not necessarily mean that jobs within the insurance industry will be deskilled. It is necessary to examine the choices which have been made and the assumptions about the nature of work which underlies them.<sup>[2]</sup>

The remainder of this section is given over to a brief review of some of the consequences for skills of the introduction of new technology into clerical work, drawing on evidence taken from a number of empirical studies.

Those who subscribe to the optimistic scenario concerning the introduction of new technology often argue that new technology provides the opportunity for the enlargement and enrichment of jobs, freeing clerical workers for more interesting and fulfilling jobs. Rajan (1984) for example argues that these types of development demand that employees possess problem solving diagnostic skills since, prior to computerisation most clerical jobs were mundane and routine. Rajan argues that rather than deskilling clerical workers, new technology can be seen as liberating them.

However, the benefits of such 'liberation' may not be distributed equally throughout the workforce. Studies by Child et al. (1984), Werneke (1983) and Smith and Wield (1989) illustrate the reorganisation and polarisation of jobs in banks which have introduced new technology; similar conclusions are reached about the polarisation of jobs in other industries by Gallie (1991) . The established bank clerk's role has been divided into routine tasks of cash handling and dispensing, and the less mundane ones of dealing with customers queries. The latter have been allocated to a newly created grade of 'Personal Banker', a post requiring a good deal of problem solving and social skills in dealing with customer queries. The routine tasks are dealt with by cashiers using secure tills and automatic cash dispensers made possible by New technology. The secure tills are shared by all cashiers and are balanced at the end of the day for the entire branch by the technology they incorporate. Cashiers are thus deprived of the opportunity to practise the skills involved, but the technology incorporated into the tills means that the individual responsible for any mistake can be identified and held to account.

It might be argued that removing the regular balancing of their tills at the



end of the day is a way of reducing the mundane aspects of the bank clerk's work. However, this perspective is not necessarily shared by all those engaged in such work:

"When I first started here there were massive ledgers - I was responsible for two of them. There was much personal pride in keeping these straight, neat and accurate - competition between the girls about who's got the best ledger. Now you just 'blame the computer'." (Bank Clerk quoted in Crompton and Jones 1984)

The polarisation of clerical jobs described above has resulted in changes to the career prospects and training necessary for clerical workers and also to the gender composition of the clerical workforce. Rajan reports that the automation in banks has changed the training requirements for bank employees. Prior to the introduction of new technology it was not uncommon for bank clerks to receive up to 6 months training in the back office and accounting procedures necessary to carry out the duties of a teller. Whereas after the introduction of the technology workers typically received about 4 weeks training for that aspect of their work. (Rajan 1984). Similar trends are reported by Ashburner (1987) in the training of clerical workers in Building societies. A consequence of such changes has been a loss of 'career' posts and an associated growth of dead-end clerical 'jobs' which tend to be filled by women (McInnes 1988, Goldthorpe 1980, Stewart et al. 1980, Child et al. 1984, Smith and Wield 1988).

Applebaum and Albin's study of work organisation in the American Insurance Industry provides an illustration of the potential for the reorganisation of work using new technology and some of the consequences for clerical workers. The study identified two major strategies relating to the organisation of work among insurance firms when introducing new technology for clerical workers. The strategy among firms adopting 'Algorithmic' organisational structures was to use new

technology to remove discretion from the clerical workforce. Firms adopting this type of strategy created clerical posts in which the work was largely routine - the clerical 'jobs' described in the paragraph above. In such firms as far as possible decision making had been reduced to rules implemented by computers.

Other ('Robust') firms had used new technology to create clerical positions in which workers were involved in all aspects of the selling and issuing of policies and responding to customer complaints. The changes to job design was facilitated by new telephone technology which increased the volume of calls able to be received. This technology also allowed the management of the firm to monitor the number of times the phone rang before the call was answered, the length of time taken to answer an individual query and the number of queries handled each day by each clerk (Applebaum and Albin 1989).

The authors conclude that the clerical jobs in such robust firms were skilled in the sense that the workers were knowledgeable about the products of the firm and were more responsible for them. Nonetheless:

"An increase in job complexity and responsibility was often accompanied by a loss of autonomy increased stress and more stringent regulation of working time." (Ibid. p 261)

The conclusion that such jobs were skilled, despite the level of control exercised over clerical workers by management, reflects the conclusions of many commentators that clerical work is more skilled as it offers the opportunity for workers to undertake a wider variety of tasks. This is viewed as the use of new technology as taking the 'drudgery' out of clerical work and freeing workers to perform more interesting work.

Both Lane (1988) & Rajan (1984) point to the opportunities for 'job-rotation', whereby employees can perform a number of tasks, as a corrective to the trend towards the fragmentation of jobs resulting from the introduction of new technology into the office. Such rotation, though, takes for granted the initial creation of tasks which are specialised, boring and meaningless (Smith 1989). Furthermore the creation of such tasks which require little in the way of contextual knowledge illustrate one of the most important consequences of the introduction of new technology to clerical work: the substitutability of clerical workers. The skills of the clerk were previously developed through their cumulative experience. Clerical workers were able to exercise discretion based upon their knowledge of office procedures developed over time. Their skills were both content based - knowing what the purpose of an activity was - and contextual - knowing how one piece of information fitted into a flow through the office.

The changes to the nature of clerical work are further illustrated by West (1982) using an example from the APEX pamphlet "Automation and the Office" of an order clerk whose work in the unautomated system involved the complete processing of orders including the calculation of prices, confirmation of delivery dates and completion of the necessary documentation. In the automated system the work of the same clerk would consist of entering details into a computer via a keyboard and reading the details produced by the computer from the visual display unit. The abilities to perform the latter task are not dependent on the experience of the clerk and are more widely distributed throughout the workforce than are those necessary for the former.

The standardisation and simplification of clerical work necessary for and

brought about by the introduction of automation to the office has meant that the 'skills' necessary for the completion of clerical work have altered. The conclusions of Applebaum and Albin's survey illustrate the nature of the changes: for many clerical workers the 'skills' which are valued by employers are no longer firm (or job) specific but relate both to the technology used (computer literacy) and to the social relations of production, social and communication skills, planning and organising time etc. (Applebaum and Albin 1989). Such changes in employers' attitudes (and actions) reflect the general argument in this chapter - that the changes to clerical work consequent upon the introduction of new technology necessitate changes to the traditional organisation of the clerical labour market and consequently to the organisation of training for clerical workers.

Such changes are reflected in the design of BTEC courses which emphasise 'process' skills, the use of information technology and positive attitudes to change. The latest specification of BTEC National courses illustrates the changes in the demand for 'process' skills rather than for contextual knowledge. Traditionally, courses for students who are (or who intend to be) employed in the Public sector have been different from courses for Private sector employees. The Public Administration courses offered for such students have focused on an understanding of the structure and functioning of the Public Sector. From September 1992 the previous distinction between Public Administration and Business Studies courses has been abolished. The BTEC specification states that:

"..the major national bodies in various areas of public administration have made clear their view that employees in the sector require the same outcomes or competences as those working in other areas of administration,... They believe that those who work in public administration should therefore receive the same

qualification and recognition as others, carrying equal transfer and mobility. (BTEC April 1992, emphasis added.)

Clerical workers in the Public Sector are now to be regarded as interchangeable units with their counterparts in the private sector. They are therefore to be able to 'benefit' from the same opportunities to transfer easily between one clerical position and another.

By far the greatest problem in assessing the consequences of the introduction of new technology for skills is that the meaning of the central concept - skills - is rarely defined and therefore is not used consistently. This is the case in discussions of both clerical (and other) work and in vocational education. The concept of 'skill' is capable of bearing a number of interpretations and it is essential to establish clearly the sense in which it is being used at any point in the discussion; but as Thompson points out:

"Systematic definitions of skill are surprisingly hard to come by in the literature on deskilling"  
(Thompson 1989)

### SKILLS IN WORK AND IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

The notions of skill and skilled work can be conceived of in three main ways all of which can be seen to be employed in discussions of the skilled nature of work in general and clerical work in particular.

Firstly, the model implicit in Braverman's analysis is based upon the unity of conception and execution and involving the possession of particular techniques - the worker decides what needs to be done, plans the best method of achieving the desired outcome and then implements these plans. This conception of skill emphasises the control exercised by skilled

workers based upon their detailed knowledge of the production process and their monopoly of complex competencies which are not widely distributed throughout the population and which are developed through practice (Beechey 1983, Child et al 1984). This model of skill is the one which is implicit in those studies which focus on the fragmentation of clerical work and the loss of autonomy by clerical workers consequent on the introduction of new technology.

An alternative view of skill and skilled work is as 'socially constructed' categories that come into being through the success of certain groups of workers in gaining recognition for the type of work that they perform as 'skilled'. Hence

"there are forms of labour which are conventionally defined as skilled but do not involve both conception and execution and lack complex competencies, yet because of Trade Union control or custom and practice have become (or remained) socially defined as skilled" (Beechey 1983)

This use of the label 'skill', represents skills as the outcome of bargaining between workers and employers. Periodic attempts to reorganise the labour process provides opportunities for resistance and the withholding of co-operation by workers. Employers depend upon the co-operation of the workforce and are forced to enter into negotiations concerning the organisation of work. Such a view of skill as a negotiated category represents a criticism of Braverman's account of the development of the labour process which presents Capital as all powerful and able to achieve it's wishes without any effective resistance from the workforce (Elger 1983). At the very least, Braverman understates the ability of workers to resist attempts by Capital to take control of the labour process.

To give an example from the area of clerical work, the introduction of

word processors to secretarial work has been presented as part of the process of deskilling of clerical work (Barker & Downing 1982, Huws 1982), as the skills required to operate one are far more easily acquired than those required of a traditional typists. However, employers have not been able to take full advantage of the opportunities provided by the introduction of this type of technology to employ cheaper labour to operate word processors. The unions representing secretarial workers (at least in large organisations) have been able to win recognition of word processing as a new 'skill', and to gain higher pay for word processor operators.

The ability of groups of workers to gain recognition of their work as skilled leads them to defend its bargaining power in relation to their employer through work value issues and through 'restrictive practices', which also operate against other workers through demarcation rules and the control of apprenticeships (Matthews 1990). These 'restrictive practices' are the expression of relations of power at some point in the past (Shaiken 1984) and have, we should note, been the subject of attack by employers attempting to introduce 'Flexibility' in their firms (Atkinson 1986), a project which has been fostered and supported by state policy. It was argued in Chapter 3 that the emphasis on vocational education in education policy should be understood as a part of this overall state policy to introduce greater flexibility in the labour market.

Whilst there is an obvious distinction between the two conceptions of skill and skilled work outlined above in terms of their origin, the two conceptions do share an important feature: both depend on a degree of control by the workforce. This can either be control over the process of production based upon workers' knowledge and competencies in relation

to that process in the first 'technical' sense; or control of labour markets based upon the ability of organised labour to gain recognition for certain types of work as skilled, even though it may be basically similar in its content and demands to work labelled as semi-skilled. Thus by whichever criteria work comes to be defined as skilled, and the workers who perform it come to be regarded as possessing skills, the degree of control exercised by the workforce provides a bargaining lever which is legitimated by reference to their skills and represents an obstacle to the realisation of the greatest surplus value by the employer.

The third model of skill sees it as the possession of specific techniques or competences which are abstracted from the context in which they are exercised. This model views virtually anything as a 'skill', no matter how widely that ability is distributed throughout the population. The MSC model which saw, for example, "sorting according to size or colour, counting items, lifting or transporting items" as skills, is the most extreme example of this model (MSC 1984): which is not to say that the model has not been influential. (see Holt 1987)

This conception of skill differs from the first model discussed above, as the competences which count as 'skill' are not concerned with the planning of what is to be done or the way in which it will be done, but represent an ability to 'get on with' preset tasks determined by others - the element of control which is essential to both the previous definitions of skill is absent:

"What is left to workers is a reinterpreted and woefully inadequate conception of skill: a specific dexterity, a limited and repetitious operation, speed as skill... The instruction of the worker in the specific requirements of Capital". (Braverman 1974 p 443)



This, however, appears to be the model of skill which is used by those who adopt the optimistic perspective on new technology. The use of new technology seems of itself to indicate that the work is 'skilled', simply on the grounds that the work is different from that which has gone before, irrespective of the ability of such technology to increase managerial control over the workforce and to reduce the workforce's control over the labour process (Evans 1982, Gill 1985). It is also the model of skill which informs the design of vocational courses which specify the development of 'skills' (and which are now increasingly expressed in terms of competences). These skills are primarily transferable 'process' skills - for example problem solving - which are intended to be developed in one context and then applied in a range of others. Such skills are 'content free', usually specified at a very low level, and intended to be useful in a range of occupations/tasks. What counts as skill in much of the discussion of education and employment are often, on further analysis, low level abilities which one might employ in everyday activities: answering the telephone, cutting with scissors (taken from MSC n.d.). A review of Jobs in the Service sector by Rajan (1987) argues that an expansion of work in 'support and personal service occupations' has led to a demand for a repertoire of skills. Rajan's description of "Reskilling" in retail occupations, which is described as typical of other growth industries, indicates that the meaning and purpose of 'skill' is not the traditional conception in which an individual can perform complex tasks which grants them a degree of control over the labour process:

"In order to achieve a higher utilisation rate, sales employees should be able to perform multiple functions requiring a set of varied low-level skills. Clerical.. duties require keyboard and diagnostic skills for computer usage; low level knowledge based skills in subjects such as marketing, book-keeping and stock control; and analytical skills for the preparation of management information. (Rajan 1987 emphasis added)

Skills here are defined as whatever is necessary for employees to be more effectively directed in the interests of capital accumulation; the low level abilities which are necessary for these jobs are seen as essential to make workers more flexible and therefore more productive.

It was argued in the last chapter that underlying the specification of vocational courses in terms of such low-level skills is a view of the organisation of work in the future. The assumption is that the future is one in which flexible firms will pursue policies of 'distancing' (Atkinson 1986) in relation to their workforce: maintaining a core of skilled workers and seeking numerical flexibility by policies of subcontracting, and the greater use of temporary workers called out of and returned to a reserve army of labour as the demand for products changes. The skills demanded of these peripheral workers are defined in relation to tasks in a highly detailed division of labour and premised upon the absence of control by workers over the processes of production. Such workers must have an understanding of the social relations of production which will allow them to 'fit in' quickly - hence the emphasis on teamwork and social skills in BTEC and other courses - and have a range of abilities which would enable them to perform a number of tasks within organisations.

Chapter 5 argues that the emphasis on skills in the design of BTEC business studies courses reflects the basic concern to promote change in the labour market. The courses are based on the need to prepare young people for the 'realities' of working life in clerical jobs in the future. Underlying the design of the courses is a view of the clerical labour market in which the skills demanded of them will be generalised ones related to the use of information technology. Equally important is the intention to develop appropriate attitudes to change which will facilitate

the creation of such a labour market. Such an interpretation is not necessarily shared by teachers in colleges; their understanding of the concept of skills and the way in which this informs their practice is analysed in chapter 6.

Simpson et al. illustrate both the confusion which surrounds the concept of skill and the consequences for workers who perform work which has been redesigned using new technology; nonetheless their analysis highlights some of the ideological importance attached to the emphasis on skills in the design of vocational courses. They argue that skills are multidimensional and by way of illustration offer an example based upon the 5 dimensions of Marketability, Training, Know How, Craft and Experience. Using the example of a skilled worker in engineering who is called upon to operate a machine using a Computer Numerical Control (CNC) system, they argue that the reduction in the craft element of the worker's skills associated with the introduction of CNC is compensated for by an increase in the worker's marketability. Thus, the authors argue, the constituent elements of the workers skills have been altered and the paradox that the individual worker retains or even enhances his/her skills while the task performed is less skilled is resolved (Simpson et al. 1987).

Such an analysis obscures the political and economic consequences for workers. The status of skilled workers and their associated income advantage depended on their ability to transfer their (certified) scarce skills across the external labour market in which the balance of supply and demand favoured the workers (Hyman 1988) (and, to repeat the point made earlier, the certification may reflect either abilities which are in short supply or arise from Trade Union control). The changes to work brought about through the introduction of new technology have meant that

the skills necessary for the completion of such work are much more widely distributed throughout the population and this has changed the balance of supply and demand in the labour market, with a consequent effect on wage levels. The portrayal of skill as being enhanced by increasing the marketability of the worker masks the possibility that the new technology may be introduced with the aim of reducing the wage bill by increasing the number of workers who are capable of performing the work - the other side of the increased marketability of the individual worker. Such developments may be resisted by the Trade Unions involved but, as the experience of the print industry shows, new technology may enable employers to operate without the experience of their existing workforce, replacing 'skilled' workers with new entrants without any apparent effects on the quality of their production. To develop an example given earlier, white collar unions initially were able to gain increased pay for staff using wordprocessors, but the diffusion of the technology throughout organisations has meant that new staff are routinely expected to use wordprocessors without the increased payments which their counterparts originally received. <sup>[3]</sup>

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This chapter has argued the introduction of new technology to clerical work has brought about changes in the nature of the abilities demanded of clerical workers. This has produced changes in both the training of clerical workers and the structure of the clerical labour market. New technology has the capacity to remove the necessity for both content and contextual knowledge from the work performed by the majority of the clerical workforce and to reduce clerical work to the following of routines. The abilities necessary for the completion of many clerical jobs which have been reorganised using new technology are much more widely

distributed across the labour force and are transferable between jobs, firms and even industries. Consequently, firms are no longer using internal labour markets to develop and retain workers with those skills.

Increasingly, many clerical jobs are located in an external labour market reflecting the distinction between jobs and careers highlighted earlier.

The change from an internal to an external labour market, which was envisaged by BEC and has subsequently been adapted by BTEC, has consequences for the training of clerical workers. The internal labour market emphasises the development of acceptable behaviour on the part of the employee, holding out the prospect of promotion through the firm in return. Removing this power over workers means that other ways have to be found to exercise control over them - and BTEC courses can be seen as an attempt to develop desirable behavioural traits among clerical workers: the design of the courses reflects an attempt to replace the internalised values associated with a career in a single firm with a set of values which will enable clerical workers to transfer successfully between a variety of jobs. Many of the innovative features of BTEC courses (to be discussed at greater length in the next chapter) such as the emphasis on student activity and on the development of skills; the nature of assessment - what is assessed and how it is assessed reflect an attempt to create the conditions necessary for an external clerical labour market by replacing the existing system of job specific training with transferable skills useful in a variety of clerical jobs. This project reflected the assumptions of the 1970's about the consequences of new technology for the nature of clerical work but remains an important element of state policy in increasing flexibility in the labour market.

## NOTES

1. Thompson (1990) argues that many of the 'fine grained' criticisms of the thesis are inappropriate in terms of the level of generality at which the work was intentionally pitched: Braverman set out to establish that deskilling was a tendency rather than a strategy which was always achieved.

2. The use of micro-electronics should not be seen as automatically and of its nature resulting in the deskilling of work; the organisation of work is not determined by the technology available (Webster 1990), except in a negative way: the invention of micro-electronics does not determine the way in which that technology will be used, but until it had been invented the options for the organisation of work that it presents could not exist. The division of labour which is produced by the introduction of technology is a consequences of political choices, both at the stage of the design of technology itself and of the implementation in any particular workplace.

As Robey comments

"[Micro-electronic technology] may be used to create highly centralised, low discretion structures, accompanied by routine, unskilled jobs or decentralised high discretion structures, where the jobs will be high discretion and non-routine" (Robey 1980: quoted in Crompton and Jones 1984)

Child et al. show how in one hospital microelectronic technology was used to enhance the skill of the medical staff (largely because the machines into which it had been incorporated were designed by the staff themselves), whilst in Banking and Retailing the technology had been used

to deskill work. (Child et al 1984). However, the use of the technology in the way Child et al. describe is a further reflection of its political nature: the staff who participated in the design of the machine already were powerful and the majority of studies show the technology as increasing the polarisation of skills. (Shaiken 1984, Gallie 1991)

Wilkinson describes the prevailing attitude to technology as the "Innovation Approach" which presents the process of technical change as the successful adoption of innovations in technology which then has a variety of 'impacts' on work organisation. In such an approach technology is divorced from the material base which gave rise to it and is seen as having an independent existence. The Innovation Approach ignores the political nature of technology which may be introduced with the conscious intention of transforming the nature of work. (Wilkinson 1983)

The dominant approach, therefore, attempts to depoliticise the redesign of work brought about by changes in the technology used.

3. In one of the colleges in which the interviews on which part two of this thesis is based, the college management had responded to cuts in funding by cutting secretarial (and other support) services but had proposed to buy wordprocessing equipment for the lecturing staff, thereby reducing the wage costs without affecting output. Such a development was resisted by the College NATFHE Branch but the reduction in the level of secretarial support put pressure on staff who had to produce handouts etc. for their classes without adequate servicing leaves the outcome unclear.

## Chapter 5

### BUSINESS EDUCATION; PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

"BEC and TEC were products of the 1969 Haslegrave report. Their origins are rooted in the experience and priorities of the 1960's and their development has been largely in response to the perceptions and needs of the 1970's" (BTEC 1984a)

This chapter takes up and develops the arguments made at the end of the previous chapter that the design of BTEC courses reflects the intention to respond to and promote further changes in the organisation of the clerical labour market.

BTEC was formed in 1984 by the merger of the Business Education Council (BEC) and its sister organisation the Technician Education Council (TEC). The merged body was originally named the Business and Technician Education Council, it was renamed adopting 'Technology' in place of 'Technician' in January 1992. This chapter argues that the policies adopted by BTEC are essentially the same as those developed by BEC in relation to business studies courses. The chapter offers a historical account of the policies devised by BEC, and shows their persistence in BTEC courses, based upon research undertaken in BTEC's archives and from a review of past and contemporary BTEC publications. In pursuing this analysis the chapter focuses solely on BTEC's policy towards the clerical labour market. The persistence of certain themes relating to the organisation of clerical work first identified in BEC policy are traced through to policy statements from BTEC. Other features of BTEC's policy are not addressed. The problems which BEC perceived as facing employers and employees arising out of technological change in the future are identified. It is argued that the courses reflect the perceived needs of employers for a flexible workforce rather than responding to



their expressed demands. The relationship between these 'needs' and the design of the courses, which contained innovative elements relating to the development of 'skills' not associated with traditional subjects or courses, and the approach to teaching and learning are examined.

It is argued that there are a number of tensions within the design of BEC (and subsequently BTEC) courses. These tensions arise out of the ambiguous position of both bodies as agents of state policy seeking to meet what are perceived as employers longer needs; at the same time BTEC depends upon sales of its 'product' for its income, which means that the courses must be seen to be responding to the immediate concerns of employers. Such tensions have been further exacerbated by the approach to validating courses taken by the NCVQ. While BTEC courses have been most closely aligned with a neo-liberal agenda for reform of the labour market, the NCVQ is more clearly concerned with establishing the standards necessary for the performance of present jobs. The most important focus of these tensions is the term 'Skill' which features in all discussions of BTEC (and other vocational) courses.

The chapter argues that the 'Common Skills', specified by BTEC as an essential element of all of its courses, represents the original intentions of BEC to facilitate changes in the labour market. An important part of the argument will be that the discussion of skills in BTEC courses takes place through a "Slogan System" (Dale 1986) which is used by various parties to legitimate diverse practices which reflect their own values and interests. The tensions which underlie the courses make such a slogan system inevitable.

### CONSTRUCTING THE PROBLEM

BEC was established in 1974, as a consequence of the 1969 Hazlegrave Report into technician education (DES 1969). Its terms of reference, taken from that report, were to plan and administer and keep under review the development of a unified national pattern of courses in business studies.

From the outset BEC identified the problem which the courses were intended to solve as concerning the quality of the workforce employed in business. Workers in business were seen as facing new challenges and their ability to respond effectively depended upon the quality of their training. Improving the quality of the whole workforce through education and training, would it was argued, improve the effectiveness of British industry:

"The strength and efficiency of business organisations in Britain does not depend on a few geniuses at the top, or whizz kids on the way up. It depends much more on the skills and competences of the hundreds of thousands of people who make up the boiler room of all our industry and institutions. Moreover the work of this vast group is becoming increasingly demanding in terms of techniques."  
(BEC 1979/80)

Elsewhere in BEC publications the nature of the changes which were seen as making the work of those employed in business more demanding are elaborated. The development and application of new technologies to office work was a major element in "The Increasingly complex environment" (BEC 1975) within which business had to operate, and, BEC argued, many young people were intimidated by computers and unable to respond to technological problems (BEC 1975 Foreword).

BEC had therefore constructed a problem in which workers were seen as deficient - lacking the skills necessary to respond to the demands of

changes in the work environment brought about by developments in technology. BEC's response was a series of courses which were justified in terms of responding to the demands of increasingly complex work and which would assist students to respond flexibly to the changing demands placed upon them (BEC 1977).

This construction of the problem and the response reflects the assumptions of Human Capital theories of education. In Human Capital theory education is seen as investment in skilled manpower<sup>(1)</sup> and like all investment has to be judged in terms of its returns, both for the individual and for society. Many of the arguments took the form that, because levels of earnings showed a high correlation with levels of education, differences in income were a consequence of returns to educational investment (Schultz 1977). Education was seen as producing more productive workers who in turn received higher wages from the more satisfying and skilled jobs which they would be able to undertake. Such an approach was not universally shared by those within BEC. The Research and Development Committee within BEC discussed over a long period the feasibility of undertaking a survey into the costs and benefits of a business education. A paper presented to the committee in 1977 questioned whether the study should go ahead. It was argued that the real value of the contribution made to their employers by staff who have been 'educated and trained' was not clear. There was felt to be a danger of isolating the costs of business education when similar exercises had not been carried out in other areas (BEC 7/3/1977).

Both the doubts and the survey were suppressed, presumably in the interests of BEC as a commercial enterprise. BEC needed the acceptance of its courses by employers who would both recruit young people with

BEC qualifications and who would also supply students who would produce fee income. It would be unwise for BEC to undertake a study which called into question the basic assumption - that education and training increases the contribution made by individuals to firms - on which sales of its 'product' depended.

Despite these reservations, BEC continued to offer a justification for its courses which reflected the underlying assumptions about the impact of technology on work and skill levels and the effectiveness of courses in assisting students to respond to these demands.

### TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE

From its inception BEC's public statements about its courses reflected popular ideas about the consequences for work of structural changes in the economy and the introduction of new technology which were prevalent in the mid-to-late 1970s, see for example Jenkins and Sherman (1979), and Goldwyn (1978). Underlying BEC's public pronouncements was an acknowledgement of the uncertainty about the effects of structural and technological changes on employment levels and job design:

"The rate of change and its precise impact in different areas of employment are uneven and are difficult to predict ... although computer based systems have been available for a number of years without having a significant direct impact on the working lives of many who are employed in business, the ready availability of efficient cheap micro-computers has dramatically altered the situation." (BEC Autumn 1980)The potential for change in the nature of office

work was explicitly recognised by the Working Party set up by BEC's Education Committee to consider Secretarial Studies courses. In its report to BEC council the group argued that technical and technological advances had begun to change the nature of work in business and that developments

in information based systems had the potential to change the face of office organisation by the turn of the century. In making its recommendations for BEC's courses, the working party made it clear that it had been looking to the future organisation of work (BEC October 1976). A similar perspective on the future organisation of work is incorporated into the design of all BEC courses.

Underlying the problem and solution which BEC had constructed for itself was a view of the nature of work in the future. This view was summed up in a section headed "SECURITY 'VARIETY' FLEXIBILITY" in a publication intended for parents of prospective BEC students:

"BEC courses are devised to suit all kinds of businesses, because most people change their jobs several times in a lifetime and need a qualification that will enable them to move between employers." (BEC 1982c)

There are a number of significant points in this statement: the idea that was gaining currency around this time that the future structure of employment for individuals would be interrupted and that workers should expect a number of career changes throughout their lives; the unification of the interests of business (..devised to suit all kinds of businesses..) and the individual (because most people change their jobs..); and finally the possession of certain qualifications as easing the process of job changing - implying the existence of a fully developed external labour market where employers understood the value of those qualifications. As was argued in the previous chapter, such a labour market has not traditionally existed for clerical workers because of the 'firm specific' nature of their skills.

The notion that employees would no longer be able to expect a life long career with one employer first appears in BEC's original consultative document, under the heading 'Mobility of Employment'. In this section

BEC states that the Core of its courses was intended to facilitate the mobility of employees between employers by identifying a body of skills and knowledge which would be useful to employees in any kind of clerical work (BEC 1975). BTEC course specifications now include an element called 'Common Skills' which are seen as including the general skills necessary for success at work (BTEC July 1986). These skills are presented elsewhere as a range of transferable skills which allow people to cope with change more easily and which will increase their adaptability (BTEC 1988).

The original emphasis on the transferability of workers between occupations was subsequently elaborated to include a reference to developments of new technology in a document which seems to have redefined, or perhaps made explicit, the origins of BEC:

".. BEC was established in 1974 to .. devise and validate a new, unified systems of awards, sufficiently flexible to (a) cater for anticipated changes in information technology and (b) enable people to acquire the skills needed for several changes of job in a lifetime." (BEC 1982b)

It is this perspective on the effects of the introduction of new technology - the dynamic nature of the technology, its effects on the market for goods and services and the consequent effects on the demand for labour - which forms the rationale for the design and development of BEC courses. The assumptions which underlie the design of BEC courses are those which inform the design of other vocational courses, such as TVEI and CPVE, and which were examined in the last chapter. In short these are that for a substantial number of workers the future holds the prospect of periods of interrupted employment. 'Flexible firms' are seen as calling upon workers to undertake a variety of tasks and then returning them to the labour market as the demands of production dictate where they will await

the offer of employment with another firm. The aims of the courses are stated as being to provide students with the skills which would enable them to transfer between jobs easily. In order to achieve this transferability students would need to be equipped with the skills and knowledge which will be useful to them in a variety of occupations and also to have those attributes certified in a way which is recognisable by employers.<sup>[2]</sup> Students must also develop 'appropriate' attitudes towards change - accepting it and its consequences for them as employees. The aims of the courses are to regulate young peoples' orientation to work as much as to equip them with useful skills. BTEC courses therefore represent a determined intervention to facilitate the creation of the idealised labour market described in Chapter 4.

The transferability of workers between occupations is, of course, not only in the interests of students but also of employers. Employers benefit from reductions in their recruitment and training costs and also reductions in the general level of wages as the transferable skills are more widely available on the market. This is important given the increasing size of the tertiary sector which has seen an increase of almost 4 million jobs in the period between 1970 & 1988 (Maguire 1991). The next section considers the relationship between BEC and employers and the representation of their needs in BEC courses.

#### EMPLOYERS & THEIR NEEDS

The reforms introduced by BEC into business education courses were based upon public declarations that the deficiencies in previous courses were in part attributable to employers not having been sufficiently involved in the nature of the courses which their current or future employees were following (BEC 1979/80). Therefore, the first policy statement from BEC stated that

"..it is of the greatest importance that employers become deeply involved in the development of courses. For its part Council will seek to achieve this by inviting onto its boards employers with the appropriate experience... Where colleges.. devise courses .. BEC will be looking for evidence that employers have been involved in the planning stages." (BEC 20/1/76)

It was argued earlier that increasing the influence of employers in course design was intended to counter the power of "Educational producer groups". However, the involvement of employers in the development of courses at the local level seems never to have been allowed to challenge certain features of the courses. For example the requirement that the courses should be integrated; the initial consultation document sets out the intention that courses should consist of an integrated group of components (BEC 1975) and this design element recurred throughout all discussion by BEC of its courses (and remains an essential element of the revised specification issued by BTEC). Admittedly the initial consultation document was produced in the name of BEC (as were all the other documents referred to here) which consisted of employers' representatives but the evidence from the interviews conducted in colleges as part of the research on which this thesis is based is that employers were not demanding that the courses were integrated (see chapter 8). Nonetheless, the insistence on employer involvement with colleges in planning and devising courses is stated to be to ensure that the courses reflect the needs of employers so that colleges are not training people for "yesterday's jobs" (BTEC 1987). However, this seems incompatible with the evidence from research undertaken for BTEC which acknowledges the difficulties of getting employers to specify the the knowledge and skills that their workers would need in the near future (Castling and Challis 1986) let alone the longer term. It further conflicts with the evidence of employers' requirements as expressed in the design of NVQ awards.



The involvement of employers is part of the wider process of reducing the power of teachers and increasing that of employers in educational matters, discussed in chapter 3. However, the evidence from the research undertaken in colleges is that the involvement of employers at local level has been at the margin. For example, employers have been involved in deciding on the pattern of option courses to be offered. They have also influenced the decision to offer students a particular "stream" - a Distribution or Public Administration stream where the employers in the catchment area served by a college offer such employment. Colleges encourage such involvement as employers can provide part-time students, or recruit from the courses, thus validating the course in the eyes of potential students. The influence of employers could hardly be anything other than marginal when the detailed specifications of the courses are prescribed by BTEC centrally (for First and National level courses) or subject to approval by them for courses at Higher level. Such approval seemed, to many of the college staff involved, only to be granted if the college's submission matched closely the guidelines issued by BTEC (Kelly 1984).

Despite its commitment to employer involvement BEC itself was reluctant to enquire into what employers perceived as their needs, but offered a view of what was in employers' best interests:

"Members [of BEC's Council] noted the suggestion made jointly by the ATTI [Association of Teachers in Technical Institutions - now NATFHE] and the APC [Association of Principals in Colleges] that research was needed into the long-term and short-term needs of employers, but agreed that this was not a new suggestion and that in the past such research had not produced helpful information upon which action could be based."  
(BEC 20/1/76)

The major innovative features of BEC courses do not appear to be a

response to the immediate demands of employers. Some insight into their origins is given in the discussion minuted at the 2nd meeting of the Research and Development committee, which was considering a survey of the potential market for BEC courses, where it was

"observed that the findings of such a survey could demonstrate that the basis of the criteria underlying the formulation of BEC policy might need to be changed in the light of need rather than demand. (BEC 30/4/76 emphasis added)

BTEC courses are aimed to promote employers' needs in the longer term. These 'needs' incorporate the assumptions about the consequences for the design of work and for the labour market brought about by the development and application of new technology in offices described in chapter 4. The courses do not reflect employers' demands as expressed in their practices in recruitment (see below). The experience of staff in colleges reveals that employers' demands were expressed in traditional terms and not the types of skills which BTEC Specifies:

"..we have had one or two attempts to get employers to say 'what is it you would like us to teach your students to do?' And they said 'Economics and Accounts'. They did not say practical activities ... Possibly the employers have always had their sights on qualifications of professional bodies, and the professional bodies want traditional subjects" (Lecturer P, Nash College).

The problem implicit in the comments made by this teacher is one which has been identified by a number of commentators on vocational education. For example, Raffae (1990) argues that the type of changes in the nature of training which YTS has tried to promote have failed because the changes have proceeded from the 'bottom up' (in terms of the hierarchy of educational courses) whereas most educational change operates from the top down. Watts (1983) has pointed out the difficulties of establishing vocational qualifications as credible alternatives to academic ones: vocational courses are portrayed in public policy as a response to

criticisms by employers of the failure of academic courses to prepare young people for the realities of working life. However, employers continue to recruit for the best paid jobs from among the holders of academic qualifications, thus sending the message that such courses are the most suitable preparation for a well paid and interesting job. The findings of the National Economic Development Office Report - 'Education and Industry' - which identified the lack of any mechanism, other than market demand, for employers requirements to be made known to the education system were referred to in the previous chapter. Employers' practices in the labour market tend to reinforce the existing academic hierarchy and it remains the case that following a vocational course tends to cut the student off from the real vocational prizes (Berg 1970).

Given the conservative effects of employers recruitment practices, state intervention in education and training has sought to bring about changes through the establishment of structures which require colleges and schools to be accountable to state agencies. This obligation has been substituted for responsiveness to the demands of employers, even though promoting such responsiveness is asserted to be the underlying aim of policy. The demands of, for example the MSC (now the TEED), have been based upon a view of what employers' needs are, expressed in terms of low-level generic skills, to which the education system must respond. The state's view of what the needs of employers are has been substituted for the actual demands of employers as expressed through the labour market - the contradictory influences in 'New Right' ideology which have brought about this paradox in state policy were discussed in chapter 3.

The nature of the perceived needs of employers in BEC Courses were

presented in a publication entitled 'BEC Courses to Meet the Needs of Business'. This publication makes the point, reiterated in many other publications, that the courses place the greatest emphasis on developing abilities which are relevant in every field of business (BEC Spring 1983). It is in the context of a response to the perceived demands of work structured by new technology that we can understand the importance of the repeated references to the pervasive significance to be given in the courses to the importance of Information Technology and the fundamental skills which would be transferable between occupations (see for example BEC 1975, BTEC 1984).

The rationale for such an approach is made clear in a paper prepared by the Education Policy working Party and approved by BEC's full council in 1976. The paper argues that existing examination schemes and syllabuses tended to emphasise the differences rather than the similarity of what was taught and examined. It then sets out BEC'S approach in a section which is worth quoting in full, both for its significance in supporting the argument in this chapter and also because it presages the work of the NCVQ in establishing a framework for classifying and categorising qualifications (and the people who possess them):

"Council believes, however, that it is in the interests of students, employers and professional bodies that the emphasis in future should be on the similarity of educational requirements for a range of related occupations or careers. It also intends that its new awards by providing a common educational base will enable the student who wishes to change his career pattern or occupation to do so without having to cover again subject matter already mastered in a previous course. The employee on whom a job or career change is forced by economic circumstances or changing technology will also benefit from this transferability." (BEC 29/6/76)

The design of BEC courses did not reflect employers' short term

demands, but represented an intervention, by an organisation dominated by employers and sponsored by the state, intended to promote changes which were in employers' longer term interests. If the future did demand that employees should change their jobs a number of times throughout their lifetime then what was necessary was some mechanism which would enable the employers who would be offering the new jobs to recruit new staff - such a mechanism is an external labour market. If developments in technology meant that innovative firms survived and the others went to the wall, then the best response was to make sure that the market worked effectively and (in the language of classical economics) that the resources released from the uncompetitive firm should be put to more productive uses by the innovative one. Hence what was required was an intervention which would enable the labour market to function effectively and which would allow workers to appear as relatively homogeneous commodities in the market, willing and able to transfer quickly and easily between a variety of clerical jobs. The courses represent, therefore, an attempt to reform the clerical labour market and to regulate young peoples' relationship to that market (cf. Moore 1988, Gleeson 1990).

This perspective on the purpose of BEC highlights the tensions at the heart of BEC's (and subsequently BTEC's) policies and the institutional and curricular arrangements to translate such policy into practice: these tensions resonate with the tensions between the neo-liberal and neo-conservative influences in educational policy making. Such tensions arise out of BTEC's contradictory position as an agent of state policy - whose purpose is to promote reform of aspects of the labour market - whilst being dependent for its income on 'selling' its courses to employers and to students. Traditionally state agencies have not been dependent on market relationships *for their income and existence*, in this sense they have been

'relatively autonomous' (Althusser 1972, Fritzell 1987). The uncertainty which BTEC's dependence on income from course fees has been greatly reduced by the primary objective given to it: of rationalising the existing pattern of courses. BTEC enjoys a virtual monopoly of post-16 education for those not taking 'A' Levels, but it still depends on employers for the acceptance and credibility of its qualifications. The credibility of BTEC qualifications has been challenged by the creation of the NCVQ and the official support for the approach to course design which it has adopted. The NCVQ's approach has directly contradicted that adopted by BTEC. The significant elements of BTEC course design has been the emphasis placed on students developing abstract transferable skills, and acquisition of knowledge which would be useful in a variety of jobs: it is a central argument of this thesis that this represents an attempt to promote change in the operation of the labour market. NCVQ validation on the other hand depends upon courses satisfying standards of competence defined by employers of particular sorts of workers - for example there are around 50 differing 'lead bodies' specifying these standards in the engineering industry. The competences which are specified reflect the demands of *existing* jobs rather than the transferable skills which would be useful in a range of occupation in the future.

Official support for the work of the NCVQ in validating courses has been strengthened by the new funding arrangements for FE under the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act. This Act establishes an FE Funding Council (The FEFC) which will be responsible for the distribution of funding for vocational courses between colleges. The FEFC will only fund colleges to provide courses which have received NCVQ validation, thus ensuring that all colleges will offer only courses which have been appropriately validated. BTEC has therefore had to respond to the

changes in course design which NCVQ validation demands. At the same time it has attempted to retain a distinctive 'brand image': the course design has undergone radical changes in recent years, yet BTEC argues that at root its demands are unchanged. The most recent course designs therefore reflects the concern with standards and content. At a conference to 'launch' the 1992 BTEC National specification the view was expressed by BTEC representatives that the 1986 specification had 'gone too far in removing content' and that the new specification would be the equivalent of the first year of an Economics degree. The courses also retain those features which were intended to facilitate the creation of a clerical labour market. As will be shown below the traditional concerns make up the content of the courses, whereas the desire to create the conditions necessary for a clerical labour market give the form of the courses which constitute the innovative and most important element of the course design.

One manifestation of BTEC's response to these tensions has been the introduction of a 'Moderating Instrument' for BTEC courses, as part of its system of quality control. In 1990 the Moderating Instrument was applied to the BTEC business studies module 'The Organisation & Its Environment' and took the form of a written time constrained test, requiring students to undertake some routine calculations, write memos and other similar tasks relating to a brief case study which they were given in advance. Based on the results of this test, comparisons were made between predicted and actual numbers of students receiving various grades in a number of other modules in their course. For example, on the basis of the results of the tests in Nash college, it was predicted that 13.9 (sic) students would gain grades above 'Pass' in the course unit 'People in Organisations' whereas 22 actually did. The college was called upon to account for this variation. Similarly, the results for the Marketing and

Business Law units were deemed by BTEC to be 'in line with National Standards'.

Such an event might appear unexceptional until BTEC's own policies on assessment are examined (much of the material in this paragraph is based upon BTEC September 1986a). BTEC has promoted systems of in-course assessment which are criterion referenced, where students are not compared to each other but to standards specified within colleges, and has encouraged teachers to pursue assessment strategies which are valid in terms of the desired outcomes of BTEC courses. This has meant that colleges have been encouraged to adopt assessment practices which reflect the active style of learning intended to be the norm on courses and which involve students in a range of assessment methods which reflect a concern with processes as well as products. Above all, BTEC policy states that, the greatest importance is to be placed on the validity of assessment. These features of assessment policy arise out of BTEC's concern to promote change through the courses it validates. Its intention to promote change brings it into conflict with the traditional demands of employers as expressed in courses validated by the NCVQ and creates the tension referred to earlier.

The form of moderating instrument chosen seems to violate almost all of BTEC's own policy on assessment: a traditional unseen, time constrained, test of one particular course unit has been used to make predictions about students performance in a number of course units and shows scant regard for any principle of validity; the style of test reflects little concern with many of the skills which BTEC argues that its courses should develop; the failure to specify criteria and to issue them to students in advance; and the choice of a numerical grading system would all be routinely queried by



course moderators. Despite protestations from staff and students alike<sup>31</sup> BTEC has taken a very traditional approach to accommodate the demands of employers expressed in terms of 'standards':

"BTEC has a duty to the ultimate users of their qualifications, those who use them to perceive the merits of potential employees, to ensure .. that.. quality and credibility is maintained at a very high level.." (Letter from BTEC Moderator to Nash College 11/12/90)

Given the influence of the DFE and other government departments in approving appointments and providing 'assessors' for all the committees and boards within BTEC (see chapter 3), the organisation has to be seen to be responding to the political climate within which it operates and therefore acknowledging the concerns of employers and right wing politicians. Without such a response its course would lose credibility, and consequently, income as the qualification lost its value in the labour market. BTEC has therefore chosen to respond in traditional terms to these concerns.

BEC (and subsequently BTEC) has attempted to resolve the tensions in its purposes through the promotion of its courses as being concerned with the development of certain skills. The lack of precision with which the term is used in vocational education in general and BTEC courses in particular is analysed in the final part of this chapter. For the moment it is sufficient to note that the emphasis on skills has allowed a discussion of vocational education in which the various parties use wider and narrower interpretations of the same terms and which allow them to ignore the underlying interests of the other parties. For example, certain teachers interviewed for this study welcomed the emphasis on skills as it allowed them to distance themselves from the traditional business studies curriculum and the values which underpin it. On the other hand, for many employers 'skill' means exactly the contents of the traditional

curriculum: knowledge of accounting procedures etc. For all of the parties the honorific overtones of the term 'skill' means that the discussion proceeds without there being a need for the term to be defined. The next section examines the various elements of BEC course design, paying particular attention to the tension between 'knowledge' and 'skills'.

### COURSE DESIGN

Further evidence of the conflicting pressures, described above, to which BEC had to respond was that it produced a course in which there appeared to be some confusion over course aims. While many of these aims were specified in terms of the skills which students were to develop (see BEC 1975, BEC 1977), the course units which students were to follow were set out in terms of the traditional subject matter which made up a business studies course.

To teachers and students the difference immediately apparent between BEC courses and traditional business studies courses was that the subject matter was divided up into 'modules'. For example, the business studies module entitled 'The Organisation in its Environment' had as one of its stated aims to encourage students to bring together and relate academic disciplines as contributions to solving business problems (ibid.). The module contained material which would traditionally have been found in Economics, Law and (if it appeared in the courses at all) in Sociology/ Government syllabi. However, while the intention was to promote an interdisciplinary approach to developing problem solving skills, the detailing of learning objectives which were clearly identifiable in terms of separate subjects meant that in many colleges the course was divided up and taught by an Economics teacher and a Law teacher and that little actually changed (BTEC May 1985). The conflict between the form

which the courses were intended to take and the way in which at least some of the content was described resulted in a confusion over the nature and purposes of the courses. This generated an ideological space which allowed teachers to interpret BEC's requirement in a variety of ways which has allowed the differences in the courses which are described in the second part of this thesis.

One of the novel aspects of BEC courses which contributed greatly to the divorce between the form of the courses and their content was the emphasis on certain 'non-Subject' elements of the courses. These included the specification of 'Central Themes': Communication; Financial awareness; Numeracy; and Adaptability to changing circumstances which were to permeate the whole of the course (based on BEC 1979/80). Further the courses included 'Cross Modular Assignments' (CMAs): assessments which were not associated with any discrete element of the course, but which were intended to be a vehicle for ensuring its integration (BEC 1977).

CMA's were a compulsory element of all courses, for which a minimum 30 hours of class time had to be allocated in part-time courses. As well as providing a major method of integrating the courses, CMA's were also intended to promote the development of students' problem solving skills. The specification for CMAs contained no reference to subject matter except that in solving the problems set for them students should draw on concepts, information and techniques from studies on the rest of the course (BEC 1977). The assessment of CMAs was to be concerned exclusively with the skills of problem solving and not subject competence (BEC March 1980).

A review of the progress in implementing BEC courses in 1979/80 indicated that there were varying degrees of success in developing the intended approach to the courses. A policy document issued in March 1980 gave guidance about good practice. The spread of such good practice was to be monitored by Course Moderators who had the responsibility for checking that assessment practices reflected the importance attached by BEC to these 'non-subject' elements of its courses.

The importance attached to these 'non-subject' based elements of the courses differentiates BEC courses from previous ones and the question of why the non-subject elements of the courses were so significant needs to be addressed. BEC clearly saw these elements as very important, devoting a complete policy document which set out in much greater detail than previously the approaches to ensuring that assessment was concerned with the skills and themes implicit in the course design thus contributing to the perception which was widespread among teachers that BEC courses were not concerned with knowledge. The knowledge base of BEC courses appeared to be intended to be secondary to the experience of following the course and the skills that it was intended that this would develop. These skills were intended to be transferable skills which would facilitate the transfer of employees between occupations, they would contribute to the creation of an external clerical labour market. The 'experience' of the course was defined in those elements of the course design relating to the approaches to teaching and learning.

### Teaching and Learning

The presentation of module content in terms of learning objectives - intended to be statements about what the student should be able to do - rather than in the more traditional syllabus format which deals only with

the subject matter to be 'delivered' by the teacher, reflected the intention that the courses should be student centred and activity based:

"Council's policy emphasises STUDENT achievement. Module specifications focus on the development of appropriate student learning activity directed towards learning objectives, rather than upon detailed delineation of subject matter to be put across by the teacher." (BEC 1977)

Teachers and students were therefore expected to have new roles: student centred methods meant that students should be required to take a much more active role in learning, the teacher to become much less of a subject expert and more of a problem setter and facilitator. Suggested teaching methods reinforced the view that students and teachers were no longer intended to be subject specialists, but 'generalists' who drew on knowledge from a variety of disciplines to solve practical problems (BEC 1975 appendix 6).

The devaluation of established approaches to teaching and learning was made explicit in BEC's first annual review of standards, and contributed towards the antagonism towards BEC courses from many teachers:

"There was still widespread evidence at all course levels, of an approach which focused heavily - sometimes entirely - upon knowledge and information related narrowly to the traditional academic subject disciplines. Symptomatic of this w[as] ...a curriculum strategy based largely on formal lectures and essays." (BEC January 1980)

The importance of these elements of course design needs to be explained in terms of the relationship between the design of BEC courses and the changes in the organisation of clerical work referred to in the previous chapter. The design of the courses represents an attempt to anticipate the requirements of employers in the future, a future which was very uncertain because of the the development of micro-electronic technology. The technology made possible the redesign of clerical work and was likely

to mean more rapid life cycles for firms.

The uncertainties associated with the developments in office technologies meant that less emphasis was to be placed on the knowledge element of the courses and more on the skills/attributes of the students - it was more difficult to predict the precise knowledge requirements of employees who would be able to transfer between a variety of occupations than to specify a range of dispositions which they would need. If workers were to change jobs a number of times they would still require the social skills necessary to get on in an office, that they would, in sociological terms, understand the relations of production in an office. The design of the courses can be seen as introducing them to these relations of production.

The successful student on a BEC course would have to display considerable commitment, to have taken responsibility for her/his own progress through the course, to have shown a flexible response in dealing with unfamiliar problems, to have been reliable and produced work at regular intervals at her/his own initiative. In short the same kinds of behaviour which are seen as desirable in employees by employers (Blackburn and Mann 1979). An employer who was confronted with a student who had passed a BEC course could be sure that they possessed the abilities to get on with others, knew their place in the hierarchy of the office, could use information technology, would adapt quickly to the realities of their new employment, and could be relied upon to act responsibly and to be self-disciplined (cf. Hartley 1987).

BEC's approach to the design of courses was not reflected in the courses validated by BEC's sister organisation TEC (The Technician Education Council). TEC courses were specified in terms of behavioural objectives,

but ones which were often related to traditional academic subject matter. The course units were largely independent of each other and assessment strategies focused on testing students command of subject matter through a series of tests conducted throughout the course, known as 'Phase' and 'End' tests. For example, a teacher who was required to teach a ten week unit within a course might find that one week had to be given over to a phase test and one week to an end test - the practical result for teachers and students was that the courses became assessment oriented to the exclusion of almost all other concerns. Given the nature of course and assessment design it is not surprising that the courses were criticised for not including sufficient practical work and emphasising the acquisition of knowledge at the expense of its application (BTEC 1988). (That such features persist in certain BTEC courses is illustrated by Riseborough (1992) who points to the overloading of students on a BTEC National Hotel and Catering course with assessments, apparently including written assessment of how to use a duster).

The educational policies of BEC and TEC were quite different. When the two validating bodies merged in 1983 the new body - BTEC - had to produce policies which would reflect its views about the appropriate model for work related education to meet the needs of employers. Those which it produced in its first policy statement 'Policies and Priorities into the 1990's' (BTEC 1984) reflected views which were more consistent with the approach of BEC than TEC. The underlying theme was that Information Technology stood to revolutionise the nature of work and that BTEC's courses should reflect this.

#### POLICIES AND PRIORITIES INTO THE 1990'S

The rationale offered by BTEC for its creation and for the policies it

proposed depended upon constructing a problem which was very similar to that which BEC set out to address; at the heart of this problem was the view that:

"Traditional occupational boundaries are becoming eroded by the impact of new technologies on working practices. There is an increasing need for versatile staff in commerce and industry." (BTEC 1984)

BTEC set out to encourage such versatility by incorporating many of the elements in its courses which were present in BEC courses:

interdisciplinary themes, a focus on student activity and the development of skills. The major change to the courses was the specification of certain skills which were to be common to all BTEC courses; the existence of these 'Common Skills' were said to have "important implications for teaching and learning strategies" (BTEC July 1986) which were, BTEC specified, intended to be learner centred.<sup>[4]</sup>

The following section sets out an analysis of the treatment of the concepts of 'skills' and 'learner centred education' in discussions of Vocational Education and indicates the ways in which these elements are treated in BTEC courses.

### STUDENT CENTRED EDUCATION

There is much similarity between the conceptual apparatus of progressive and vocational education: the focus on the needs of students, the emphasis on integrated areas of study, the adoption of continuous rather than terminal assessment, and the insistence that courses should be student (or learner) centred. In each case there is no clear cut definition of the term (Dale 1979, Holt 1987), but Dale (Op Cit.), Jones (1983) and Gleeson (1989) identify the anti-industrial bias of those who originally espoused such principles. The view that vocational education has progressive



potential arises largely out of the emphasis on 'Student Centredness' in teaching and learning. (Avis 1991, Holt 1987)

Rowland's attempt to present his understanding of student centredness identifies both the difficulties of defining its meaning and its consequent potential appeal to a variety of interests:

"To subscribe to student centred learning is to affirm a set of values rather than to believe that a certain technique or set of techniques are the most efficient means of teaching ... It would seem that these values relate primarily to the relationship between the teacher, the student and the subject matter.." (Rowland in Bates & Rowland 1988)

Student centredness in vocational education has become associated with a number of features: an emphasis on the student's active participation in her/his own learning, the demand for Relevance and for a curriculum which meets the 'needs' of the student. The overarching concept which is used to link these features in BTEC Courses is that of 'Skills' - students need to participate in their learning in order to develop their skills, skills which will be relevant to their future lives and which will meet their needs to secure, and be successful in, work. The language used to describe skills presents them as being concerned with students' needs. However, the analysis offered here shows that the specification of skills is framed in terms of a concern with employers needs.

### SKILLS AND BTEC COURSES

An essential feature of BTEC courses of all kinds (that is whether for Agriculture, Hotel and Catering, Business Studies or Design) is that they must include an assessment of Skills which are common to courses in all occupational areas.

"..course guidelines identify a range of personal and intellectual skills which, though differently described by the various Boards, are common to

all BTEC courses and constitute a major cluster of core skills." (BTEC July 1986)  
These 'Common Skills' - covering self-development, communicating, problem tackling, using Information Technology and others - are seen as being important for workers in all occupations and are therefore a mandatory element in the design of BTEC courses. BTEC offers a justification for this emphasis on skills which is based upon the relevance of skills to the 'needs' of students and their self-development. Such a justification is consistent with many attempts to offer a philosophical justification for the curriculum based upon the 'needs of students' and offers an apparently educational rationale for the design of the courses which will appeal to those teachers who see their role as educators.

Examples from the "General Guideline on Common Skills and Core Themes" will illustrate this point. In a section which declares that the keynotes of BTEC's approach to Skills development are 'Realism and Relevance' BTEC argues that its concept of relevance is not a narrow one and identifies self development as a crucial Common Skill area - the intention appears to be to make it clear that 'relevance' means relevance to the student's needs. Relevance is related to

..the students needs in developing Common Skills, Competence, Self-awareness, and the capacity to cope with the demands and responsibilities of adult life and work" (BTEC September 1986)

However, a careful reading of the document reveals that what are presented as students' needs relate to certain 'National Priorities' including a closer relationship between education and training (Ibid., Introduction). The idea of promoting self development through education is one with which many liberal educators would associate themselves in principle - although it is unlikely that they would use the term 'skill' to describe such a process. On closer investigation, though, 'self

development' is interpreted by BTEC as being concerned exclusively with the student's career and the ability to respond to changes in the organisation of work - a feature of BEC courses commented on earlier in this chapter.

The liberal sounding justification for the design of curriculum based on skills which emphasises the 'needs' of students and their self development is in reality based on the identification of the needs of students with national priorities (which in turn are based upon the needs of employers for a flexible workforce). The subjection of the needs of the individual to the needs of employers underlay the creation of BTEC; as early as 1982 (over a year before BTEC was officially created) the chair of BEC argued that the new body would provide students with courses which they would find "invaluable in adjusting to the needs of the new world" (THES 26/11/82). The needs of the new world are, predictably, interpreted as the needs of employers.

The extent to which the detail of the justification offered by BTEC for its courses influences the practices of teachers in colleges is of course a matter for further investigation; the second part of this thesis illustrates the way in which teachers in two colleges have devised quite different BTEC Business Studies courses, but which the teachers concerned justify by selective emphasis of different elements of BTEC policies.

### Criticism

Criticisms of the emphasis on skills in vocational education tend to take three main forms: first, that skills cannot be extracted from the context in which they are exercised and therefore to plan a curriculum based on skills is meaningless. (Wellington 1987)

Secondly, it is argued that the skills which are specified in courses are often written in behavioural terms and ignore the cognitive and affective skills (Rowntree 1985, Wellington 1987). Further, the terms in which such skills are defined are at such a low level that the student either has nothing to learn - Jonathon gives a sample of such skills in YTS which she argues would be achieved by getting out of bed and out of the house in the morning (Jonathon 1987)-or reveal the assumption of the designers about the student following such schemes. One MSC publication shows how a young person on a Youth Training Scheme might exercise the 'Basic Skills' of Planning and Problem Solving, Number, Communication, and Practical Skills through filling shelves in a Supermarket (MSC April 1983); of course, this would be in the context of a planned and approved scheme which is contrasted with narrow job specific training which is no longer sufficient to meet the needs of industry!

The third type of criticism is that what are referred to as skills are often really attitudes (Jamieson 1985) and that the emphasis on the development of skills is really a desire to change young peoples' dispositions and attitudes in favour of the industrial/economic status quo. Concerns over the use of profiling in skills-based courses such as TVEI can be seen to be linked to this type of criticism: Hargreaves (1986) argues that the profiling of students increases the extent of control over young people exercised by the school (cf. Bernstein 1980) and represents :

"a more generalised trend towards the development and implementation of increasingly sophisticated techniques of social surveillance." (Hargreaves 1986)

#### This analysis and BTEC courses

Although the general themes of the first type of criticism can be heard in

colleges where teachers often assert that BTEC has emphasised the development of skills at the expense of the acquisition of knowledge, such criticism is hard to substantiate from BTEC literature - which is not to argue that such teachers do not adapt their practice to what they perceive as the requirements of BTEC. An early BEC publications refers to the aims of the National level course as (inter alia) :

**"Enabl[ing] the student to apply Knowledge, understanding and skills gained from the course to work in business.." (BEC 1977 p5, emphasis added)**

and later publications state that

**"BTEC emphasises the importance of skills as a way of enhancing (not replacing) Knowledge and understanding by ensuring that students apply them in realistic contexts." (BTEC 1987)**

It is difficult to argue therefore that BTEC *itself* has designed a scheme which does not recognise the context specific nature of skills and that the exercise of skills calls for the deployment of knowledge and understanding. However, in the course of the field work on which the second part of this thesis is based a BTEC Moderator was interviewed who claimed to have written the section of BTEC policy referred to in the last extract. She argued that BTEC may have misrepresented its position relating to the relationship between skills and knowledge through utilising the:

**"..pendulum method of change.. you try and kick them [teachers] as far as possible because you'll never get them that far, but they'll settle back somewhere near where you do want them to be." (Moderator BTEC Higher Course, Nash College)**

An alternative explanation is that BTEC has indeed changed its position concerning the balance between skills and knowledge, in response to the emerging power of the NCVQ in FE. Such a position would reflect BTEC's acknowledgment of the ascendancy of the NCVQ and would be

consistent with the analysis of the changes in BTEC's policy referred to earlier in this chapter.

The second line of argument, that skills refer only to behavioural outcomes, has been addressed directly by BTEC who wish to define the term as involving a wider range of abilities:

"The Term *skill* denotes cognitive (or thinking) skills as well as more purely technical or manipulative abilities (psychomotor skills)."  
(BTEC 1987)

When attempts are made to establish criteria for the demonstration of 'Thinking Skills', however, the philosophical difficulties encountered are great and the results easily open to ridicule.

The third line of argument is that the term skill most often refers to attitudes which are seen as desirable rather than any competencies on the part of students. Support for this analysis can be gathered from BTEC publications where, for example, in the document 'Policies and Priorities into the 1990s' under a section headed "Personal Qualities of Students" it is observed that:

"A student's possession of certain basic qualities and abilities may make the difference between success and failure at work ... These *skills* can be as important at work as specialist knowledge and expertise. ( BTEC 1984)

Skills here are taken to be those personal qualities of students which allow them to 'get on' with other people at work and also, to return to the theme of the earlier part of this chapter, to help them adapt to change at work (BTEC 1987). The reference to Skills here cannot therefore be concerned with the ability to perform complex tasks - one of the 'traditional' meanings of skill explored in the previous chapter, and the sense in which the term is used by many employers - as it would make no sense to argue

that the ability to (say) draw up a balance sheet would make the individual better able to adapt to change. It can only be understood as the argument outlined above indicates as referring to attitudes - the willingness to accept change being the attitude which is at the heart of the design of these courses.

BTEC course design is intended to promote the development of the skills necessary to get on with other workers and with their supervisors and to internalise certain attitudes to their own work and the needs of their organisation:

"..every employer faces problems when interviewing candidates for a post, wondering: will he/she fit in with the team? Will they be able to learn about the job without having to be told everything? Will they use their initiative? Will they be able to deal with customers or other staff? Will they be able to evaluate what they do? These sorts of abilities are .. typical of a range of skills which are common to all occupations .. BTEC now requires the development of these abilities... in all its courses at all levels." (BTEC March 1987)

What can be seen from these extracts from BTEC publications is that there is an ambiguity in the use of the term 'skill' which mirrors both the ambiguity in the use of the term when applied in industrial and commercial contexts - see chapter 4 - and the ambiguity involved in the idea of vocational education (Dale 1986).

The use of the term 'skill' in the discussion of BTEC courses operates as a "Slogan System" - a phrase which Dale has coined in relation to TVEI to describe the

"..apparent surface appeal for a wide range of different constituencies who are able to invest it with the capacity to meet their own needs or to fit in with their own interests...its implications for those taking part in it are connotative rather than denotative, permitting if not encouraging a

wide range of different interpretations." (Dale 1986)

The use of 'skills' in BTEC publications is used to cover personal qualities, the abilities necessary to apply knowledge to solve problems and also cognitive skills of analysis and abstraction - consequently there is no uniform agreement about, or understanding of, what is meant by the term 'skill' in the colleges in which BTEC courses operate. The result is that staff in colleges interpret the emphasis on skills in BTEC courses in a way which enables them to reflect their own values and interests; the practical effects of such differences are discussed in the second part of this thesis.

## CONCLUSION

The chapter has indicated the kinds of considerations which underlay the design of BTEC courses. It has been argued that the courses emphasise 'non-subject' elements which are intended to develop transferable skills necessary for the operation of an external labour market, such a market being seen as the appropriate response to the anticipated effects on the nature and organisation of clerical work arising out of developments of new technology. The primary purpose underlying the design of BTEC courses has been the creation of a course in which it was the experience of the course itself, and the attitudes and dispositions which this would develop in the student, rather than the knowledge that s/he would gain which was important. The design reflects the ideological assumptions of human capital theory concerning the identity of interests between employers and employees: in its own terms its aims were to assist

"...the students to develop those attributes which will enable them to deal more easily with the demands which arise from technological, economic, or environmental change." (BEC 4/4/77)

What remains to be established is the extent to which the intentions which



underlie the design of BTEC courses have influenced the actions of teachers in colleges and affected the orientation of students to the labour market. These issues are taken up in the second part of this thesis which reports and analyses fieldwork data gathered in two colleges of FE.

## NOTES

1. Human Capital Theory focused on skilled *Manpower* and not a skilled *workforce*, as the theory tended to assume a pattern of full-time, continuous and life-long participation in the labour force and ignored the pattern of employment followed by the majority of women.
2. In terms of the arguments presented in chapter 2 concerning the nature of state intervention in the labour market through schemes of training it is worth noting here that BEC never defined its students in terms of the type of employment which they undertake but always in terms of their qualifications: students are presented as equivalent to their existing qualifications- see for instance BEC 1977 p5.
3. Instead of completing the specified tasks one student at Nash College wrote a statement objecting to the nature of the Moderating Instrument. This concluded with the observation that "EXAMS DO NOT BELONG IN BTEC COURSES." and then set out the criteria against which her statement should be judged (reflecting those routinely used by the staff in the college) - BTEC graded her efforts as 'Fail'.
4. BTEC has introduced the term 'Learner Centred' in place of the original 'Student Centred'. This is presumably as a consequence of its concern to adopt the vocabulary of the NCVQ. NCVQ validated qualifications are intended primarily to be assessed in the workplace, rather than in colleges.

## PART TWO

### OVERVIEW

#### Introduction

This overview sets the second part of the thesis in context. Chapters 1 to 4 have argued that BTEC Courses represent one particular aspect of state policy to reform the labour market through changes in vocational education. The remaining chapters examine the evidence gathered from fieldwork undertaken in two colleges about the extent to which such a policy has been successful both in changing the practices of teachers and the attitudes of students. The two colleges were chosen for study because of the marked differences between the courses which are offered in them. These differences existed despite the similarities between the communities which the colleges serve, the local labour market within which they operate and the size and structure of the departments in which the fieldwork was conducted. The existence of such differences offered an opportunity to examine the range of influences which determine the way in which the demands of BTEC are interpreted and translated in to practice within colleges. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 examine such issues as the existence or absence of developed 'ideologies' among groups of teachers about their role, the distribution of power within colleges, the strategies used by BTEC in bringing about change and the ways in which these strategies have been resisted by students and teachers.

The analysis in previous chapters has suggested that in order to promote change in the labour market, BTEC, along with other state sponsored institutions, has adopted a strategy of attempting to control the autonomy of teachers through increasing the influence of market forces in the provision of education. The intention in the following chapters is to

evaluate the extent to which the development of BTEC courses has restricted FE teachers' autonomy. The second part of the thesis examines the evidence about the ways in which the practice of teachers can be seen to be preparing young people for entry to the clerical labour market. In order to produce evidence on which to base such an evaluation interviews were conducted with teachers and Moderators in both colleges. Students attending BTEC National courses at one college were interviewed in order to assess their response to the course, given that the staff there viewed the purposes of the courses in terms other than vocational socialisation: this seemed to offer the opportunity to examine a case where the influence of teachers in altering young peoples attitudes was most marked.

#### The colleges

The chapters which follow set out to illustrate the impact of BTEC course development in two colleges of FE - which for the purposes of this research have been called 'Nash College' and 'Wyvern College' - located in the West of England. The colleges were chosen for the fieldwork because of the differences between the courses which they offered despite the similarities in both their size, organisational structures, and also the external political and economic environment in which they are located. It has been argued in the chapters in the first part of this thesis that the intention underlying the design of BTEC courses was to promote the influence of employers in the day to day practice of colleges. The existence of such differences as were observed offered the prospect of providing evidence of the factors which influence the pattern of provision in FE colleges and the relation between such provision and the 'demands' of employers.

The following sections set out a description of the colleges with a view to

illustrating the similarities between them. The differences between the courses which were offered in the two colleges are discussed in Chapter 8.

### NASH COLLEGE

Nash College is situated in a town with a population of about 80,000 people. Employment within the town is geared to the service industries with a university, a large government department and the District council being the largest employers. The town is also a tourist resort and a shopping centre for outlying districts; consequently retailing and hotel and catering also form an important source of employment.<sup>[1]</sup> Unemployment in the town was below the national average throughout the 1980's although this concealed localised areas of high unemployment in city centre wards.

The town has a very high 'staying on rate' for students after the age of 16 and for entry of 18 year olds into higher education. At the time staff in the college were interviewed, the education authority was undertaking a programme of public consultation concerning the future provision of post-16 education. There was a vocal campaign against the LEA proposal to establish a Sixth Form College and to close the 6th Forms in all the existing Schools and in favour of retaining 11-18 education in all schools even though this meant that 6th formers would continue to travel in taxis between schools which had formed consortia to provide a broader spread of 'A' level courses. After the interviews were completed the LEA announced its decision to close an existing 11-18 school and to set up a Sixth Form college on the site. This posed a threat to the FE college as its ability to offer a wide range of A levels which it could provide compared to schools would be matched by a Sixth Form college. There was no immediate threat that the vocational courses offered by the FE

College would be offered by the new institution. The immediacy of any threat to the FE college was deferred to some extent by the decision of the governing body of the school chosen as the site of the sixth form college to apply to the Secretary of State for Education for permission to 'opt out' of local authority control. This meant that planning for the future became difficult at Authority and at college level given the consequent uncertainty on the future of post 16 education in the town. These uncertainties meant that there was a reluctance on the part of the LEA to spend large sums of money on the college. For the teachers and students in this study the uncertainty had consequences for their every day experience of 'business studies'. There was little prospect of the business studies department moving out of the run down building with peeling paint and leaking roof which it had occupied for a number of years. Little evidence existed of the kind of 'high-tech' office facilities which might be expected to characterise a business studies course.

The college was a Group 6 college according to the 'points' total generated by the students attending<sup>[2]</sup>. Individual departments were also graded according to a points total representing the number of students attending; the largest departments in the college were the Department of Business studies (Grade 5), Catering (4) and General Education (5) reflecting the employment and educational character of the town.

### The Department of Business Studies

The Department comprised 27 full-time lecturing staff and a Head of Department. The department was organised into four sections - the Secretarial Studies section (9 staff), the Professional Studies section (11 staff), the Retailing section (2 staff - located in an annexe about half a mile from the main college) and the Management studies section (5 staff).

The BTEC National and Higher level courses offered by the department were taught by 9 of the staff from Professional Studies and two from the Management studies section. The courses also called upon the services of a number of specialist and support teachers both from other departments and from outside the college. The BTEC First level courses were taught mainly by staff in the Secretarial Studies section although the level of involvement of staff from the Professional studies section had grown in each of the three years that the course had been running resulting ultimately in the creation of a BTEC Core team responsible for all levels of BTEC business studies courses within the college. The creation of this core team subsequently reduced the number of teachers within the department who taught on BTEC courses and reinforced the clear divisions between the BTEC teachers and those who taught on other types of courses. The small size of the core team created a sense of being embattled and promoted the development of a clearly articulated philosophy towards their role as teachers. The elements of this philosophy are discussed in Chapter 7.

### WYVERN COLLEGE

Wyvern is a market town in an adjoining county to Nash College. The town has a population of around 25000. The largest employers are the Local Authority, an engineering firm and a plastic products manufacturer, however by far the greatest number of people work in the Tertiary sector made up of shops, hotels, banks, offices and other services.<sup>[3]</sup> Many people from Wyvern travel to work in the town served by Nash College.

There was a low rate of unemployment in the town, indeed employers themselves were said by the staff interviewed in this study to 'phone the college and ask whether there were any more students looking for jobs.

At the time the interviews were completed, the LEA had just completed a review of 6th form provision in the town and had decided against any alteration to the existing pattern of 11-18 schools in the town: both towns in which Nash and Wyvern colleges were situated were conservative with big and small c's. The high rate of staying on after compulsory education (over 50% in the county in which Wyvern College was located) was indicated by the number of students who enrolled on the full-time National level course - 45 in the 1st year of the course when the interviews were conducted.

The college was graded as group 5 on its points total and the department of Business Studies was also graded as 5: the same size as the department in Nash college.

#### The Department of Business Studies

The department was structured into a Professional Studies section and a Secretarial Studies section. The Department offered BTEC course at First and National level as well as a range of other courses validated and examined by professional bodies.

Interviews were conducted with the 6 members of staff who taught the Core and many of the option units on National level courses. Teaching of the BTEC National courses took place in a series of linked 'Portakabin' type huts. The physical conditions in which the courses were taught were similar to those at Nash college - the huts were poorly heated by paraffin heaters and the physical structures needed repair. However, the teachers prided themselves on being 'entrepreneurial' in overcoming the conditions in which they worked. For example, two of them had spent their own time in 'doing-up' a resources room, they had undertaken a good deal of



carpentry to build a series of shelving areas and to line the walls with pine cladding. Similarly they had built a small stationery shop into an alcove in a corridor; the BTEC National students at the college took it in turn to open and staff the shop at suitable times throughout the day. Like the staff at Nash College, the teachers at Wyvern College also shared a common view of their role as teachers, but, as the following chapters will illustrate, this was based on a team culture which reflected the essentially vocational ethos of the department in which the BTEC team was located.

### Structure of the second part of the thesis

The analysis has a different focus in each of the chapters: Chapter 6 presents a comparison of BTEC Business Studies courses with those validated and examined by professional bodies. The focus of this chapter is the implications of BTEC course design for teaching and learning in Colleges. The ways in which BTEC has sought to promote the changes in teaching and learning are examined as are the responses of teachers to such changes. While the case which is presented is intended to have general application, the lines of the general argument are illustrated with examples drawn from the particular colleges in which the field work was undertaken.

Chapter seven focuses on the similarities and differences in the ways in which the purposes of BTEC courses have been interpreted in the two colleges which were the subject of this study. The beliefs held by the teachers concerned about their role as teachers are examined and the chapter shows that these beliefs produce differences in the way in which teachers justify their practices in the courses. Finally the chapter addresses the question as to what extent the differences in the ways in

which teachers justify their practices produces different outcomes in terms of the role of FE in preparing young people for a place in the labour market.

Critics argue that the BTEC 'philosophy' emphasises the development of skill at the expense of knowledge in order to replace a broadly based academic education with a narrow vocational training which concerns itself with occupational requirements over educational ones (see for example Bellamy and Franklin 1985). However, the findings presented here indicate that there is a much greater variation in practice than these critics would suggest, both within and between Nash and Wyvern colleges and in the various colleges in which the moderators operate. Chapter 8 explains these variations in terms of the distribution of power within colleges, presenting outcomes as the result of political processes. Such findings challenge any view of courses which automatically reflect in any *simple* way the needs of employers as expressed in BTEC policy.

Chapter nine presents an analysis of the attitudes held by BTEC students at Nash College. It gives an account of the motivation of students for enrolling on BTEC business studies courses and show how their expectation of the appropriate concerns of such a course conflicted with the attitudes held by their teachers. The intention here is twofold; first to illustrate a further disjunction in BTEC courses within colleges. Chapters 7 & 8 will illustrate that there was a lack of consensus between groups of teachers about the aims of the courses; Chapter 9 argues that there was a similar lack of consensus between teachers and students engaged on the same course within the same college. The chapter argues that the conservative nature of student expectations operated as a greater restriction on the teachers autonomy than the intervention by BTEC. The

other intention in chapter 9 is to offer some evidence about the influence of FE in preparing young people for entry to the labour market; in doing so the chapter offers a contribution to the debate in sociology about the extent to which individual action as against structural forces are important in reproducing a wage labour force with 'appropriate' attitudes for their position in the division of labour. Many analyses emphasise the power of structural forces at the expense of individual actors, proposing that schools and FE colleges are agencies for transmitting a curriculum (both formal and hidden) directly determined by the needs of employers to students who are shaped by it unwittingly to fulfil their economic 'destiny'. (Apple 1985, Whitty 1988). Chapter 9 argues that even though the teachers at Nash college offered a curriculum which was based on a notion of the 'needs' of students, students rejected such a curriculum to the extent that it was incompatible with their intended destination as managerial workers. As such they were more than willing participants in the process of socialisation.

### Conclusion

The purpose of the second part of this thesis is to offer evidence about the complexity of the relationships between practices in FE colleges and the preparation of young people for their place in the labour force. The intention of BTEC to influence the content and direction of teachers practices is examined and the different responses to the demands of BTEC courses by teachers is analysed. Similarly, the reactions of young people to the demands of one particular BTEC course are examined and their rejection of the values underpinning the course are explored. The evidence offered here suggests that the students themselves come to college with a view of the appropriate relationship between FE and the labour market and reject the views of teachers which are inconsistent with

that view. Rather than being simply prepared for the labour market by their college courses, this thesis suggests that the young people come to college already prepared to recognise certain types of practices in the labour market as appropriate and actively endorse those practices. The thesis proposes that their experiences in college has a minimal impact on the attitudes and aspirations of young people.

### Notes

1. Source: District Council Planning Department.
2. The 'grading' of colleges and departments was abolished in 1990.
3. Source: Manpower Services Commission Industrial Survey 1986.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE IMPACT OF BTEC IN COLLEGES.

#### Introduction

The chapters in the first part of this thesis argued that the design of BTEC courses reflected wider developments in vocational education. One of the significant feature of these developments was argued to be the intention to reduce the power of teachers (and other educational interest groups) and to increase that of employers. The purpose of such changes in the balance of power has been the attempt to relate the practice of vocational education more closely to the demands of employers for particular types of labour in the future. Specifically in the case of BTEC it was argued that the intention was to facilitate the development of an external clerical labour market by equipping young people with transferable clerical skills and promoting positive attitudes to change.

This chapter examines the extent to which the intentions underlying the design of BTEC courses have been made clear to teachers in colleges. The mechanisms which have been used to communicate with them and which have been used to control their practice are evaluated. The intention is to examine the concrete ways in which the intention to reduce the power of teachers has been translated into practice and the extent to which such mechanisms have been successful.

The chapter sets out a framework for examining and explaining the impact of BTEC on the practices of teachers in FE colleges. The chapter is set in the context of reproduction theory; a body of theory which sets out to

explain the role of education in reproducing a stratified society. The chapter identifies the ways in which the demands of employers are articulated to the educational system through the specification and monitoring of BTEC policies. It also examines the extent to which these demands are perceived and acted upon by teachers.

The strategies employed by BTEC to bring about changes in teachers' attitudes towards their role and its relationship to knowledge are examined. The chapter argues that neither the intention that teachers should adopt new roles in teaching BTEC courses nor the underlying reasons for the change were ever clearly articulated to teachers. As a result teachers perceive BTEC as adopting strategies based on coercion rather than persuasion. An increasingly important element of the strategies employed has been the use of moderators appointed by BTEC to monitor and report on the implementation of BTEC policy in colleges. The chapter argues that to date the strategies employed have not been effective in changing and controlling teachers' practices. It addresses the nature of the resistance by teachers to the changes promoted by BTEC through the concept of subject identities. The chapter argues that while the intention of the designers of BTEC courses has been to make the courses more responsive to the 'needs' of industry, the paradoxical result has been that the 'BTEC philosophy' has been most readily accepted by those teachers who are least likely to describe their role in terms of meeting such needs. The contents of this chapter provide evidence of the mediating nature of the activities of teachers in colleges in standing between the intentions of the designers of BTEC courses and the course as experienced by students.

## REPRODUCING THE SOCIAL RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION

The discussion in this chapter is located in the context of wider debates about the role of education in preparing young people for the transition from school to work and, in the process, 'reproducing' the relations of production. These relations comprise 'technical' relations - the knowledge and technical skills appropriate to the various jobs in the division of labour - and 'social' relations - the attitudes and dispositions appropriate to the occupants of differing positions within the hierarchical division of labour. (Althusser 1971, Avis 1982, Gorz 1976.)

The debates concerning the contribution of the education system to the reproduction of a stratified society reflect an underlying debate within the social sciences about the relationship between social structure and individual action; between free will and determinism. For example, Marxist theories have been criticised for excluding any role for human actors and reducing them to the status of powerless bearers of structural capacities (Crompton & Sanderson 1990). While it is not possible to give an account of the range of positions adopted within this underlying debate, the significance of the debate for analyses of education and the relationship of this debate for this thesis will be indicated.

The characterisation of FE as the handmaiden of industry, referred to in Chapter 1, represents a functionalist view of the relationship between education and the economy. Functionalists view the purpose of education as the passing on of knowledge which is valued by a society and which is necessary for its continued existence. The re-orientation of the school and college curriculum to a more vocational focus can be seen as an attempt to correct what is seen as the dysfunctional tendency for education to show a



lack of concern with the 'world of work'. Such policies reflect a view of education as concerned with the transmission of valued technical skills necessary for various positions in the division of labour.

Official policy statements about BTEC and other vocational courses tend to emphasise their concern with the technical relations of production: with equipping young people with the skills and knowledge relevant to their performance in work. This theme permeates all of BTEC's statements about its role (see for example BEC 1977, BTEC 1984, BTEC 1988a). It also features in the adverts encouraging employers to participate in the 'New Youth Training' where the conclusion drawn from a CBI survey which reported that 45% of employers had experienced skill shortages which affected production was that "It is vital we train our young" (DE 1990).

The arguments made in the first part of this thesis was that the design of vocational courses are intended to promote the interests of employers. If employers are to reap the full benefits from the redesign of jobs made possible by new technology, new attitudes are demanded on the part of employees. For these reasons, it is argued, in the context of vocational education in general and BTEC courses in particular, what is presented as a concern with technical skills can be seen to be a concern with attitudes and dispositions. The contention here is that the main concern in the design of BTEC courses has been the development of attitudes appropriate to a future where individuals are expected to change jobs a number of times in the course of their working lives. Hence the real emphasis of the courses has been on the social relations of production: the different attitudes and dispositions required by workers who will fulfil different roles within a hierarchically stratified workforce.

This type of analysis has been the principal concern of writers in the Marxist tradition. For Marxists, education is one of the institutions which contribute to the resolution of the class conflict which is the 'natural' state of society and the creation of order is the outcome of a process of an (unequal) struggle in which the capitalist class dominates. Education, in this analysis, is one of the agencies through which the relationships of domination and subordination are maintained in a systematic way. The exact mechanism of the ways in which the education system achieves such an outcome is explained differently by different theorists who place widely varying emphasis on the degree to which practices in the system are determined by practices in the economy or exhibit a degree of autonomy. This thesis offers evidence from teachers and students in two colleges about the central problem of the relationship between the day to day practice of FE and the 'demands' of the economic system and the mediating role of BTEC and teachers in FE colleges between such changes in work and the courses which students experience.

The insight offered by writers such as Althusser (1971) and Bowles and Gintis (1976) were influential in developing the analysis of the role of schooling in reproducing the relations of production. The criticisms which were levelled at them provided a stimulus to further research which helped to clarify the nature of the process of cultural reproduction. Essentially the main criticism of both analyses is that of 'Marxist Functionalism'. Althusser, for example, argues that education is a site of class struggle, but later comments about the role of the school system specifically indicates the total subjection of students to the ruling ideology:

"Each mass [of students completing school] .. is practically provided with the ideology which suits the role which it has to fulfil in society: the role of the exploited..; the role of the agent of exploitation..." (Althusser 1971)

Analyses of this type imply a stimulus/response model of the relationship between the economic and educational worlds: the economy needs certain types of workers equipped with certain types of attitudes and dispositions and the school system obligingly produces them. In terms of the debate about social structure and individual action these analyses emphasise the power of structural forces at the expense of individual actors. What the analyses propose is that schools and FE colleges are agencies for transmitting a curriculum (both formal and hidden) directly determined by the needs of employers. Students are argued to be shaped by this 'employer friendly' curriculum to unwittingly fulfil their economic 'destiny' (Apple 1985, Whitty 1988). It is implied that there is a universal reaction by all students to the demands of the school, rather than a variety of possible responses which arise out of the experiences and influences on individuals outside of the education system which shape their perceptions of the world (Buswell 1984). Because such analyses are expressed at a high level of abstraction they give little insight into the mechanisms through which the requirements of employers are made known to schools and colleges. They also imply a common response to these demands from teachers in schools and colleges (however these demands are made known to them). Chapter 5 argued that the design of BTEC courses reflect an intention to facilitate the reform of the clerical labour market; the chapters which follow describe the ways in which these demands have been made known to teachers in colleges through the intervention of BTEC and the responses of teachers and students to that intervention.

## BTEC'S INTERVENTION

"BTEC is .. concerned with not only what is learned but how it is learned; the importance of teaching and learning strategies will therefore be reflected in BTEC's publications .... The strategies advocated here, taken together, entail a learner-centred approach that should now be typical of all BTEC programmes of study."  
(BTEC July 1986 p1 & 3)

Chapter 5 explained the purposes and intentions underlying the design of BTEC business studies courses, in terms of facilitating reform in the clerical labour market. This chapter identifies the mechanisms through which the demands of BTEC courses have been communicated to colleges.

BTEC has from the outset intended to determine the practice of teachers in 'delivering' the courses that it validates. In terms of the argument made in chapters 3 & 5 that BTEC intends to reduce the power of teachers over the process of vocational education, the terminology used in BTEC publications to describe the teacher's role reflects the view that the courses are to be devised elsewhere and 'implemented' by teachers (see the discussion on autonomy and deskilling in chapter 8). Early policy statements criticised teachers for the use of curriculum strategies based on lectures and essays rather than the 'learner centred' strategies which BEC and subsequently BTEC has demanded (BEC March 1980). Further evidence of the intention to control teachers' practice and to mark the significant difference between teaching on BTEC and other courses has led BTEC to produce a BTEC teachers' guide (1987). This is contained in a thick ring binder which comes complete with a tape recorded interview with the Chair and the Chief Executive of BTEC and a Moderator. The binder contains many significant documents concerning BTEC policy and a specially produced pamphlet for new teachers entitled 'An Introduction to BTEC Teaching' which attempts to guide the new teacher through the

complete gambit of BTEC provision, from the origins of BEC and TEC through to the application forms used for making submissions to BTEC to run courses.

The documents contained in this teachers guide includes BTEC's General Guideline on Teaching and Learning Strategies which has also been distributed to colleges. BTEC is explicit in its intention to determine practices of teachers in colleges and attempts to 'police' the observance of its policies through the requirement for colleges to seek approval to run BTEC courses at least every 5 years and through the continuing process of moderation. BTEC has published detailed guidelines on a number of aspects of its policy which are used by BTEC officers to assess colleges' submissions for approval to run courses. These policies form a part of BTEC's system of monitoring the way in which colleges operate courses - Moderators have to complete a report form after their visits to colleges which directs them to address and comment upon particular questions concerning the implementation of BTEC policy and specifies any action which is to be taken by the college should its practice be considered to be deficient. BTEC's policy is an attempt to remove discretion from teachers concerning both what is to be taught and in what way. Policy statements from BTEC which set out required practice in pedagogy and assessment are the concrete expression of the intention to limit the autonomy of teachers and to promote the interests of employers. Such policies are an attempt to redefine the traditional conception of the teachers role in FE.

### The Teacher's Role

The teacher's role on the courses which pre-dated BTEC courses and on courses validated by professional bodies (often referred to as 'traditional

courses' by the teachers interviewed) is fairly straightforward: the examination determines the form and the content of classes.

"..on traditional courses I feel that you just have to go in and give it to them, ensure they've got it down and check, reinforce it in some way - which is boring ... you have got this strait-jacket, if you like, that they have to have a certain amount of knowledge to produce again. A lot of it is recall rather than using information; certainly I found that with the Institute of Bankers anyway." (Lecturer S, Nash College)

Typically a teacher who is asked to teach on a new course leading to the examinations for a professional body will ask for a copy of the syllabus for her/his subject and is then left to 'get on with it', the knowledge which students are to acquire and be tested upon is the central concern. The focus of such courses tends to be the knowledge that the teacher has, and consequently the approach is teacher centred rather than learner centred, an approach which other studies have shown has been the dominant one among teachers in colleges. (Venables 1967, Tipton 1973, Gleeson and Mardle 1980)

The professional bodies make no recommendations or demands about the styles of teaching and learning employed; that some teachers choose to introduce some of the teaching styles which they have developed as a result of working on BTEC courses, as they indicated they were doing in their interviews, is of no concern to the professional body. As institutions concerned with labour market control - that is with limiting the number of students who receive the necessary accreditation which will allow them to compete for positions within the occupational hierarchy - these bodies are only concerned with the numbers of students who pass and fail the examinations. The professional bodies work on a principle of *exclusion*. Each stage in their examinations is norm referenced and progressively

reduces the chances of any individual succeeding. Earlier chapters have argued that BTEC's concern is to create a clerical labour force equipped with transferable skills and appropriate attitudes towards work. If such a project is to be effective BTEC must work on a principle of *inclusion* so that the greatest number of appropriately prepared workers appear in the labour market. BTEC courses therefore are premised upon student success and are intended to operate on a system of criterion referencing - although BTEC's staff development materials indicates that this concept is not widely understood in colleges (BTEC 1988).

Chapter 4 of this thesis argued that the innovative aspects of the curriculum of BTEC business courses reflected anticipated changes in the nature of the skills required in clerical work. It was argued that the student-centred, integrated curriculum marked an intention to develop both broadly based skills which would be useful in a variety of emerging clerical occupations and attitudes which would be appropriate to a future marked by periods of interrupted employment. Later sections in this chapter will consider the hostility with which the changes associated with BTEC courses has provoked in colleges. Much of this hostility is articulated in terms of the lack of depth associated with BTEC courses, compared with those examined by the professional bodies. In the paper 'On the Classification and Framing of Educational Knowledge' Bernstein (1980) makes a number of propositions concerning the change from traditional curricula to more integrated types, such as those found in BTEC's specification for its courses. These propositions, which focus on the reasons for change and the reaction to them by teachers, provide a useful framework for examining the way in which BTEC courses have been developed and implemented in FE colleges. In particular the propositions offer a means of understanding the variety of practice within

and between colleges, rather than the uniformity which was intended by BTEC and suggested to be the case by critics of BTEC.

### Classification and Framing

The two central concepts which underlie Bernstein's propositions are 'classification' and 'frame'. The discussion of these concepts (Bernstein 1980) raises a number of issues which provides a framework for examining the effects of a change to an integrated curriculum by focusing on the development of subject identities among those who follow 'traditional' courses.

Curricula which are strongly classified are those in which the various subjects are clearly differentiated from each other: economics is not mathematics which is not English, etc. Weak classification means that the customary boundaries between subject knowledge are not rigidly observed and knowledge is called upon as necessary to cast light on the matter under investigation. From the account given in chapter 4 it will be clear that the curriculum in BTEC courses is intended to be an integrated one, and hence weakly classified.

'Frame' is used to describe the degree of discretion that teachers and students have in defining what is to count as a valid subject of study and in deciding on the ordering and pace at which study is undertaken. The intention underlying the design of BTEC courses was that the courses were to be strongly 'framed': the detailed learning objectives contained in course specifications, the intention that local employers should be involved in the design of courses to translate the general guidelines issued by BTEC into practice and the role given to moderators in assessing the implementation of BTEC policy was a clear attempt to limit the discretion



of teachers. However, in practice, BTEC courses can be seen as being weakly framed. The difficulties of involving employers and their limited effectiveness in bring about changes in the courses (see Chapter 6), the emphasis on the study of local issues and the development of courses to meet local circumstances and the devolution of all assessments to colleges means that, despite its intentions, BTEC has provided a general framework which gives a great deal of discretion to colleges to decide on the material which will be used. Teachers at both colleges in which fieldwork was conducted mentioned the freedom which they felt that BTEC courses gave them as compared to other courses:

"Well I think that the most significant thing as far as I'm concerned is that you've got a very free hand in the way you approach the subjects that you teach, you get all this guidance from BTEC but what it really comes down to is that you can do pretty much what you please and I like that." (Lecturer M, Wyvern College)

"You are not so constrained by a syllabus and you can attempt different ways of doing things" (Lecturer L, Nash College)

This aspect of teachers' views will be returned to in Chapter 7, but we should note here that the freedom referred to by teachers at both colleges in this study was freedom for them, not for students. Such views are echoed in other studies of vocational courses - see for example Evans and Davies (1988).

The features of BTEC and other vocational programmes - notably TVEI - which grant teachers such freedom is the intention to make colleges flexible and responsive to local needs while operating within the context of national guidelines. These features produce the paradoxical position that while the courses are intended to promote central control of teachers' practices and to limit their autonomy, the desire to allow for responsiveness to the 'market' has granted teachers a degree of autonomy

which they have not enjoyed in other types of courses. (Gleeson 1989, Harland 1988). Such an outcome is a product of the contradictions of education policies which seek to impose a requirement of responsiveness to market forces - a 'top-down' version of a policy which can only work if developed from the 'bottom-up' reflecting the attitudes of those involved - an argument developed in the section on curriculum change later in this chapter. However, the autonomy which teachers have enjoyed may now be becoming of purely historical interest, as the need for colleges to obtain accreditation from the NCVQ for their BTEC courses will reduce the discretion which teachers are able to exercise. In future students must be assessed against 'employment led' standards of competence if they are to be awarded BTEC Certificates and any college which does not run courses which assess these externally determined competencies will not recruit students - the BTEC First Certificate course at Nash College failed to run in 1990/91 as it had not been accredited by NCVQ and was therefore not recognised as an acceptable form of 'Off The Job' training for the Youth Trainees who had previously provided the main pool of recruits for the course.

Not all teachers have welcomed the changes in course design which have brought about such freedom: the 'banter' in the staffroom at Nash college showed the existence of a division between staff who taught on BTEC and those who taught on courses examined by the professional bodies such as the Institute of Bankers and the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators. Much of the banter focused on the nature of what was assessed and how. The existence of an externally set and marked exam on the 'professional' courses was seen by the teachers who taught on them as being a criterion of the quality and relevance of both the courses and the teachers themselves. The performance of holders of BTEC qualifications

who had progressed to one of these courses often provided the opportunity for criticism of the quality of practices on BTEC courses: underlying the banter were real differences in approach to teaching and learning required by BTEC and other types of vocational courses. (based on fieldnotes)

Some insight into these differences is provided by Bernstein's concept of Subject Identities.

### SUBJECT IDENTITIES

Bernstein argues that traditional academic courses, based on strong classification, produce within the student a clear self-image in terms of the subject: described as a "subject identity" which is based upon a process of socialisation into subject loyalty (Bernstein 1980). The movement towards integrated curricula (i.e. a weakening of the strength of classification) may, Bernstein argues, be felt as a threat to that subject identity and be resisted as the teachers loyalty to the subject is challenged.

Much of the hostility directed towards BTEC courses by certain teachers can be attributed to the threat that they feel that an integrated course poses to their identity as teachers of a particular subject, although the hostility is most often expressed in terms of the way in which the subject has been 'devalued'<sup>(1)</sup>:

"..it's become a lot more industry related I suppose, at the expense of .. what I would call education rather than training ... I have always taught my Economics if you like as an isolated subject in a .. TVEI-ish, experiential sort of way and I think to .. try and integrate it too much, you do so at the expense of depth."  
(Lecturer Y, Wyvern College)

"..I think the sheer weight of knowledge - that is lacking...I said originally that my approach has been, quite personally, that I like to acquire knowledge for its own sake. I find it exciting, so in fact .. this [the BTEC approach] is bad."  
(Lecturer R, Nash College) (See also Economics Association 1982, Todd 1980)

The design of BTEC courses is based on the integration of knowledge and the breaking down of the boundaries between subjects. Knowledge is approached instrumentally - rather than starting from first principles, knowledge from a variety of subject areas is drawn upon as necessary in order to solve problems. This approach to knowledge devalues the teacher's subject expertise, calling for teachers who have a general knowledge of a wide spectrum of business subjects rather than an in-depth knowledge of one, and consequently challenges the position of teachers whose position has depended on their subject expertise. The challenge to their subject identity posed by these features of BTEC courses has been an important source of the hostility of such teachers to the 'BTEC philosophy'.

In both colleges in this study this hostility had resulted in the virtual absence of Law and Accounts teachers from the team of teachers who taught the Core Units. Of the three such teachers who were interviewed, the two lawyers were involved only in the option units. The Accounts teacher who taught on the Core of the National Level course at Wyvern College had recently entered teaching directly from University and could therefore be seen as a 'professional teacher' with no work experience to reinforce any perception of the teacher's role as an Accountant who teaches. In Nash College the absence of Law and Accounts teachers was a consequence of self-selection in two senses: firstly, an Accounts teacher who was seen by the course co-ordinators as being disruptive of the course aims was timetabled to teach on other courses after a number of specific problems concerning course management in which the Head of Department had become involved. Secondly, when the plans for implementing a new specification for BTEC National courses were initially discussed in late 1985 any teachers who did not feel in sympathy

with the approach implied by the course design were given the chance to opt out of teaching on the course. The one teacher who did exercise this option was a Law teacher who taught mainly on courses examined and validated by professional bodies.

The author's general experience and also specific instances at two colleges other than the ones in which the interviews were conducted but which occurred during the same period provided evidence to support the explanation offered above. Students at the first college were timetabled to do two hours of Book-keeping each week as the Accounts teachers who formed the power block in the Business Studies Department were very unhappy at the way in which Accounting had been treated in BTEC Courses and believed that a good 'grounding' in Accounts was an essential element of any business studies course. (In the 1986 revision of National level Courses Accounting had been 'relegated' from a core unit, an essential element in all Business Studies courses, to an option unit.) In terms of assessing the degree of centralised control exercised by BTEC it is worth noting here that the moderator at this particular college knew of and did not object to this practice and is reported to have indicated that it was a common occurrence in other colleges. In the second college the Law teachers were very hostile to BTEC and any suggestion that Law could be taught through anything other than a formal introduction to the subject through lectures and note-taking was greeted with scepticism and hostility. (Such information was gathered anecdotally - the author was being interviewed for new jobs when the comments were made, rather than conducting research. There was therefore no opportunity to speak to, or determine the views of the other subject teachers, i.e. Law teachers in the first case and Accounts teachers in the second)

The limited criticism of BTEC courses among staff which was encountered in interviews could be attributable to a number of factors. It could be simply that the teachers involved were not revealing their true attitudes. However this did not appear to be the case. Bernstein's proposition suggests that it might be expected that hostility to BTEC courses would be encountered among those teachers who had formed a clear 'subject identity'. The hostility directed towards BTEC courses from Law and Accounts teachers which was alluded to earlier, and which was confirmed as being a fairly widespread phenomenon by the Moderators who were interviewed, can be explained in this way. In both these subject areas the educational qualifications which legitimate the individual's position as a subject teacher are both specifically vocational - the holders of such qualifications are often referred to, by their colleagues and themselves, as 'Lawyers' and 'Accountants' - and also take a longer period of time to achieve, with a period of part-time study while working in the profession which allows their subject identity to develop more fully. Such an experience tends to emphasise the acquisition of knowledge as developing the 'tools of the trade' of the profession and the necessity of developing a wide understanding of the type of problems which members of the profession are called on to tackle. That teachers whose professional self-image is that of practitioners who teach (cf. Gleeson and Mardle 1980) have been hostile to BTEC courses cautions against any simple model of the relationship between FE and the economy. The nature of the 'requirements' of employers as expressed in BTEC policies has alienated those teachers who see their role as preparing young people for places in the existing division of labour. Given the argument made in the first part of this thesis that the design of BTEC business studies courses reflects an intention to promote a different type of clerical labour market the courses have appealed least to teachers who explain their role in terms of

occupational socialisation. Teachers holding such attitudes will presumably welcome the changes to courses associated with NVQ validation. Such teachers tend to emphasise the need to give students an in-depth introduction to the 'basics' of their subject often at the expense of developing relationships with students.

The movement to the kind of teaching practices required in BTEC courses makes demands on teachers in terms of developing personal relationships with students which they have not necessarily previously encountered. Courses which have been based on separate subjects each examined separately have called on the specialist teacher to meet a part-time class for (say) 90 minutes each week. The wide syllabi which teachers have been called upon to teach and upon which students will subsequently be tested, the large numbers of students which many teachers have to meet in the course of a week, as they have been called upon to teach their specialism to a wide variety of groups, have all militated against the development of close relationships between teacher and taught. (Tipton 1973, Venables 1967,) It would seem reasonable to speculate that this may be an additional factor which could account for the hostility towards BTEC courses by some teachers - as a consequence of their previous experience as subject specialists in teacher centred courses they do not have the kind of skills needed (or perhaps even believe it to be an important part of their role) to develop close personal relationships with students.

Most of the teachers interviewed commented spontaneously on the differences in their relationships with BTEC students, which they generally saw as being closer than with students following other types of courses:

"I think relationships tend to be a little bit wider. It was quite possible when we all taught formally that you tended to know half the class very well and the rest of the class hardly at all. What the activity based learning actually helps you to do is to know more people better. (Lecturer D, Nash College)

"[W]hether [its] because of the method of education or whether it's in fact that the Business Studies Department runs business studies and the relations are very close because of the methods of teaching. They don't appear to be with 'A' levels [in the General Education Department] ... They are subject specialists." (Lecturer T, Wyvern College)

The change in the teacher's role which BTEC courses imply brought about changes in the timetables of the teachers who taught on the core of the course. Rather than seeing a part-time group for 1.5 hours as had been the case previously teachers were now timetabled for 3 hour blocks with one group - this could mean an individual teacher being timetabled to be with one group of students for 6 hours in a day. This reduced the number of groups (and consequently students) which a teacher would see in the course of a week and allowed them to develop different relationships with students, as students seemed to confirm:

"I thought it would be a lot like school, and its not. Its completely informal and its friendly, you know - just like a group of people getting together, learning together .." (Cliff, Part-time Year 1)

"I don't see them as teachers, actually. They seem more like other students; they don't seem like teachers.. You call them by their first names rather than 'Mr. So and so' .. and half the time they just come round and they're chatting to you like your friends and not like a teacher at all ... You get on with them better, don't you? And have a better relationship with them. If they were teachers then you wouldn't talk to them about the same sorts of things." (Karen, Part-time year 2)

The design of BTEC courses appeals to teachers who have high relationship orientations; the courses appeal least to those who have a high



task orientation. Teachers with a high task orientation tended to be those whose subject identity was most strongly developed. The requirements of BTEC courses have alienated many teachers of traditional business studies courses - the emphasis on the ability to teach general, rather than specialist, subject knowledge and the demand for closer personal relations with students have been most attractive to those who have a different pedagogic paradigm from 'traditional' business studies teachers.

### PEDAGOGIC PARADIGMS

The differences between BTEC and 'traditional' courses can be seen to require a different "pedagogic paradigm" (Esland 1971) among teachers involved on both types of courses; this term refers to the beliefs that teachers hold about the meaning and purpose of teaching and its relationship to knowledge. The attitudes which teachers hold are not purely voluntaristic - they reflect fragments of larger ideologies which become manifest in the attitude held in relation to teaching and learning. Teachers' attitudes to teaching reflect wider ideologies about human nature incorporating attitudes to discipline and freedom.

The poles of the spectrum of beliefs can be characterised as the (ideal typical) teacher who believes that her/his loyalty is to the subject - the teachers with the strong subject identities, such as lawyers and accountants, who were discussed earlier are closest to this model. At the other end of the spectrum the ideal typical teacher - who will be characterised as the 'teacher as educator' - is one who would see their loyalty to individual students and encouraging them to develop their own sense of worth. These differences are reflected most acutely in the attitude to assessment held by teachers at either end of the spectrum: the subject specialist seeing assessment as identifying the student's command

of a body of knowledge. At the other end of the spectrum the teacher as educator who sees assessment as a method of developing the teacher/learner relationship through providing more information about the present state of the student's understanding.

The poles of the spectrum are illustrated by the following teachers, whose response when asked to comment on the teachers role in BTEC courses :

"I don't think it [the teacher's role] is different, I think it is maybe approached differently. I think that in both cases the teacher/lecturer is there to dispense knowledge and also to provide understanding and to try and get students to show that understanding. (Lecturer L, Nash College)

Teachers who expressed similar views were exclusively accounts teachers and law teachers, and were in the minority among the teachers interviewed.

For the majority of the teachers interviewed in this study, BTEC teaching meant a different approach to their work. The teacher whose views about her role on courses for the Institute of Bankers were quoted previously in this chapter described her role on BTEC courses as follows:

"I really see my role as helping people develop confidence in themselves. Helping them to - well, I'm not sure if I do it, and I'm not sure if it's possible to do it, even - trying to build up self esteem, that's something which needs to be done, and trying to get them to be responsible for themselves, for their own learning patterns and helping them to understand just what they're doing. Perhaps helping them to develop their own potential further.." (Lecturer S, Nash College)

Teachers who held similar views frequently used the term 'facilitator' to describe their role. This term was used to mean that the teacher's role was to enable students to do things rather than doing them her/himself.

"Somebody who makes it happen rather than somebody who does it." (Moderator N)

The term has 'educational' connotations in the sense that it is one which is, and has been widely used in educational theory. Its use points to an attraction to these courses for those staff whose professional identity is cast in terms of 'Teacher as educator' rather than 'Teacher as subject specialist'.

The dominant paradigm for teachers on 'traditional' business studies courses has been that of subject specialist. As was indicated earlier, the emphasis has been on the knowledge that the teacher has and the teacher's role being to pass it on. The language in which BTEC course specifications has been expressed has appealed least to those teachers who see their role as 'subject specialists'. Student centredness, the focus in BTEC specifications on the processes through which students learn and not on the product of learning, the use of labels such as modules and units rather than subjects, to describe integrated areas of study, assignments for assessing students' progress rather than exams for testing their knowledge - these approaches challenge the position of teachers who legitimated their position by reference to their command of a body of knowledge. Conversely the same approach strengthened the position of the teachers who saw their expertise in creating situations in which students could learn. The practical orientation of BTEC courses with its emphasis on what students could do, rather than what they knew, further alienated the 'subject specialist' whose position as a teacher could be explained in terms of their command of specialised knowledge. It also allowed other teachers who legitimated their position as teachers by reference to their general knowledge of the world of commerce and their ability to teach a wide range of subjects to see their own position increased in prestige. The demand for 'Generalist' teachers who can teach a wide range of subjects rather than being subject specialists has increased greatly in response to

the changes in course design associated with BTEC courses.

Chapter 4 of this thesis argued that the focus on 'non-subject' elements in BTEC courses reflects anticipated changes in the clerical labour market. To meet these demands the nature of the teaching which takes place on those courses was also intended to change and this has resulted in changes to the staffing of course teams. The emphasis on student centred approaches to teaching and learning in BTEC courses has found favour with many teachers who find such an approach consistent with their educational values. The paradox is that the majority of teachers who have found it easiest to adapt to the demands of the new courses are those who might be called liberal educators rather than the 'industrial trainers' (Williams 1961). For example, in the case of Nash College, the teachers who have been removed from the course team or marginalised within it, are those who would see their teaching as being most closely related to the needs of industry. All such teachers have subsequently become involved with the development of 'high status' courses which lead to the award of qualifications by professional bodies such as the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators and the Institute of Legal Executives.

Stronach raises the question of whether

"..our new and relevant vocational pedagogies  
[are] more at odds with British realities of work  
than old fashioned schooling?" (Stronach 1989)

It is this paradox which underlies much of the attraction of BTEC courses (and other vocational programmes) to certain types of teachers - the ideal type teacher as educator. The courses have given teachers freedom to explore issues which are not directly 'relevant' to the needs of industry, using learning methods which offer opportunities for a more 'democratic' education. The ability to devote 8 weeks of a course to the consideration of a range of matters relating to equal opportunities practice, including

homophobia, disability awareness, and tackling racism and sexism<sup>[2]</sup> allows them to argue that the courses which they teach on are not 'relevant' in the vague honorific sense which the term is normally used (Barker 1987) - implicitly to legitimate knowledge which reinforces as 'natural' the divisions generated by the economic system based on categories of ethnicity, gender and physical ability. It is important to stress the earlier caveats about the consequences of NCVQ for the future freedom of teachers in vocational courses.

Certainly there is an ambiguity about the notion of 'relevance' which informs the design of the 'new' vocationalism which has the potential to make it more attractive than 'traditional' vocational courses to teachers whose professional self-image is 'teacher as educator'. While 'traditional' courses are based on separate subjects, didactically taught and formally examined, the demands of employers are not always articulated in this way either through institutions such as TEED and BTEC or in policy statements (See Forbes & Miller 1988). That the courses are rejected by those who see their teaching on traditional courses as being relevant to the needs of industry allows the 'teacher as educator' to rationalise their participation in such courses, on the basis that they offer opportunities for education rather than training. This may be a product of the intention on the part of BTEC to move from a credentialist to a functional model of the relationship between the education system and the economy. BTEC's attempt to make the content of courses more directly relevant to the perceived need of employers for a flexible workforce has prompted changes in the nature of both the content and the processes of courses. The demand has been for teachers to change from formally taught courses based on high status academic knowledge to courses which deal with the application of knowledge through practical exercises. Such changes have

alienated those teachers who see themselves as subject specialists and increased the influence of teachers whose professional identities are cast in other terms. For present purposes it is sufficient to note that the teachers interviewed in this study who saw themselves as BTEC teachers had a self-image which was not framed in terms of teacher as 'subject specialist'. The nature of the practices demanded by BTEC appears to have alienated those teachers who were most likely to have seen their work as relevant to the 'needs of industry' as expressed in the demands of 'traditional' business studies courses. Despite the intention to promote the interests of employers through the courses, the result has been the creation of a group of 'BTEC teachers'. As the next chapter will show these teachers were not a homogeneous group, although many of them had a clearly developed ideology about the nature of their work and saw their primary responsibility to students rather than to employers. The next section examines the strategies employed by BTEC to bring about change in teachers practices and to exercise control over those practices.

### Curriculum change

Given BTEC's express intention that teachers should change their practice and their attitudes in order to adopt a new approach to teaching and learning (in effect to adopt a new pedagogic paradigm), a carefully worked out strategy for curriculum change might have been expected. BTEC and its predecessors BEC and TEC seem to have been woefully inadequate in devising such strategies and the consequences have been the hostility directed towards the courses and a diversity of practice within and between colleges. BTEC has relied upon strategies which have not been effective in increasing control over teachers. The design of BTEC courses has meant that the control of assessment which has been the traditional mechanism for securing central control has not been used. The

weakness of the devolved control has allowed teachers a degree of 'space' within which to operate.

The literature on curriculum development identifies three main types of strategy for bringing about change which can be summarised as follows:

1. Power/coercive strategies dependent on access to political, legal, economic and administrative resources.
2. Empirical/rational strategies dependent on a belief that people will respond to rational explanation and demonstration.
3. Normative/re-educative strategies which start from the assumption that effective change depends on a change of attitudes, values and skills within colleges which typically involve a change agent who works within the college to promote change using both her/his curricular and behavioural knowledge.

(adapted from Bolam 1975 & Hoyle 1975)

Attempting to apply this framework (which is again ideal typical) to examine the management of the changes associated with BTEC courses a number of factors which help to account for the diversity of practice between and within colleges can be identified. The nature of these diversities in the two colleges which were studied are discussed in chapter 7.

If the argument about pedagogic paradigms is accepted then the appropriate strategies for changing the attitudes of teachers would be of the normative/re-educative type. One could expect that the period leading up to the introduction of the new courses to be marked by workshops, training sessions etc. organised by BEC and TEC for staff in colleges and perhaps more importantly for staff in Colleges of Education. Discussions with staff who taught on the courses which BEC courses replaced revealed

that any workshops which did take place were organised by the colleges themselves. These workshops were attempting to anticipate the problems of the new courses and focused on assessment - essentially on writing assignments - rather than on teaching and learning strategies. This focus on assessment is not surprising given the traditional orientation of teachers in colleges as 'subject specialists': staff viewed the changes as simply changes to the curriculum which they were required to teach and to assess. The courses were perceived as requiring a change in assessment practices rather than as an attempt to change their classroom practice. The intention to change their classroom practice was either not apparent to them or if it was was ignored.

The author was a student in one of the four Colleges of Education which specialise in training teachers for FE in the year preceding the general introduction of the courses into colleges. At that time the demands of the new courses were not at all clear to the staff who were meant to be preparing new entrants to teaching. This may well have been because BEC was unwilling to disclose the nature and purpose of the changes it was promoting through its courses - a BTEC officer interviewed in preparation for this study indicated that BEC had been selective about the information which the organisation released about its activities. He stated that BEC did not reveal what they were attempting to do until at least 5 years after the organisation had been established. The 'hidden agenda' which underlies BTEC courses has meant that BTEC has not been able to use rational/ normative strategies to bring about change and consequently the strategies employed have been power/coercive:

"BTEC has tended to be foisted on teachers, there's no consultation, no discussion as to what it actually means. BTEC arrived: this is it, get



on with it. I think there's still a fair amount of education to be done, amongst teachers and of course from the students' point of view." (Lecturer R, BTEC Higher co-ordinator, Nash College)

One of the agencies through which BTEC aims to promote change and control practices in colleges is the moderation process. Moderators have traditionally been predominantly drawn from colleges, typically they are drawn from managerial grades. In recent years BTEC has increased the numbers drawn from "commerce, the professions and industry" (BTEC 1988a), this has been brought about by "sharper selection, induction , training and development" of moderators. (Ibid.) Once again the intention to reduce the power of educational groups by increasing the power given to business interests is apparent.

### MODERATORS

The moderators appointed by BTEC are expected to function as change agents. Their ability to perform this role is limited by the amount of time which they spend in colleges; a moderation visit was said by staff interviewed to last typically about 4 hours. For 'industrial' moderators this may be because of the small financial return - one such moderator commented that he earned more in 45 minutes working for himself than he did working for BTEC on a moderation visit. Furthermore interviews with moderators revealed that despite the training which they receive there is no consistent view among moderators about their role or the purpose of BTEC courses.

"..Moderators still have a different approach and are still advocating different things. [We need] more moderator training , more discussions. I went to a series of moderator meetings; I felt 'Yes, that was a very useful day but really we perhaps ought to have had a week.' Maybe its a full time job." (Lecturer P, an ex - National level Moderator, Nash College)

Moderators are given a number of duties, summed up by BTEC as being  
"..friends of the centres [colleges], who are  
able to:

- \* be sources of advice and help in the conduct of courses;
- \* apply BTEC policy accurately to specific cases, in terms of acceptable implementation strategies and recognised good practice." (BTEC 1988)

The interpretation of what their role means in practice varies from  
moderator to moderator, as the following extracts show:

"..the thing with moderation is that it is a policeman element as much as a supportive one and like any policing of anything that requires to set standards, it's not always successful."  
(Moderator G - a Lecturer at Wyvern College)

".. the role of the moderator is multi-faceted I mean, on the one hand, yes a moderator of standards but also a staff developer. I would say much more than any of these things ..a moderator is actually an agent of change.. getting the staff to ask questions and think things through and just generally think about what they're doing and why. (Moderator N)

The infrequent nature of moderators' contact with colleges, which has tended to focus on end of unit assessment, meant that they have had little opportunity to discuss fundamental issues arising out of the course design, let alone have an impact on the day to day practice of teachers. A number of teachers at both colleges commented on the impossibility of moderators even performing a thoroughgoing check on assessment practices. Staff are aware of the need to satisfy moderators and have developed strategies for dealing with them:

"..[Y]ou do write things down for moderators which may not be entirely factual, simply because of lack of time. I mean you write down what you would like to do, but what you often end up finding is that you don't have time to do that anyway." (Lecturer L, Nash College)

The strategies adopted by BTEC have been successful in forcing colleges to adopt the 'form' of BTEC courses, the language in which BTEC courses are described is common to all colleges and has established itself

as the official 'dialect' of teachers in 'vocational' departments in FE Colleges, and was quickly (and easily) parodied. Given the virtual monopoly of post 16 Business Studies courses by BTEC, any college which did not adopt the courses would find itself with a dramatic fall in student numbers, pressure from the LEA and possible redundancies among its staff. Students would travel to other colleges to follow BTEC courses given the national status of the courses and their recognition by employers. Colleges therefore, have literally no choice but to adopt the courses offered by BTEC. The question which will be addressed in subsequent chapters is the extent to which teachers have changed their practice as well as the rhetoric which surrounds the courses. In other words to ask whether the rhetoric which is used to describe the courses is based upon a common pedagogic paradigm. Later chapters will show that, at least in Nash and Wyvern colleges, this is not the case and that teachers have used the space generated by the lack of effective central control to develop courses which they believe are in the best interests of young people. Of course, there are different versions of what *is* in the best interests of young people.

In a further attempt to ensure that the changes which are intended are taking place, BTEC has redefined the role of moderators. Moderators' visits are now required to examine matters such as course management, teaching and learning strategies and strategies for evaluating and reviewing courses as well as assessment. The detail of the issues to be addressed by the moderator all reflect the general intention to redefine the balance between educational and commercial interests. For example, moderators are asked to comment on the involvement of employers in the process of review and evaluation of the course. The outcome of such changes is not yet apparent but, as noted earlier, the changes to BTEC

courses brought about by NCVQ validation will have a much greater impact on the work of teachers in colleges than the efforts of BTEC moderators.

In other types of courses the power/coercive strategies through which examining/validating bodies seek to exercise control over colleges can be seen to focus on assessment. Changes to syllabi are enforced by the examination process; the requirement that students must sit externally set and marked examinations, means that teachers must observe any changes to syllabi desired by the examining body. However, the underlying intention of BTEC courses make this an inappropriate mechanism for ensuring compliance with BTEC's intentions.

### Assessment

The control of assessment is the most important mechanism through which other examining bodies supervise and control the operation of their courses. The typical case where the professional bodies are concerned is where students are prepared to sit an external written examination which tests the students 'command' of a body of knowledge - although the relevance of that knowledge to the content of their jobs is often very tenuous.<sup>[3]</sup>

The testing of a body of knowledge in the examination which is set by the professional body itself, means that the professional body acts as 'gatekeeper' to the profession both in determining what the knowledge is required of those admitted to the profession and also in determining how many aspiring entrants to the profession shall be deemed to possess sufficient knowledge to be granted admission. It was indicated earlier that the form of assessment also determines the nature of the relationship

between teacher and student.

Except for BTEC First courses in the period up to 1986, BTEC has always devolved responsibility for the assessment of business studies students to colleges themselves. BTEC's original regulations for all levels of courses stipulated that assessment should be through a mixture of in-course assignments and a terminal examination; this examination was often based on a case study given to students in advance and which they could take text books and other materials into the examination room with them. Subsequently the examination which carried a separate grade on the student's statement of achievement was replaced by an 'examination assignment' with one overall grade for each separately assessed element of the course. The reaction to this change has been varied: some colleges attach a weighting of 50% to the examination assignment, others 30%. Nash College accords the Examination Assignment the same status as other assignments. But, unlike most other colleges, Nash College used no set formula for arriving at a final grade for students' achievement. Teachers at this college rejected the use of a formula and saw the allocation of grades as part of the exercise of their 'professional judgement', taking into account other aspects of students' performance in the course - a matter which will be returned to in Chapter 7.

BTEC's intention was that assessment practices should reflect the learning strategies to be employed. A course which emphasised learning activity would have as its primary focus the assessment of 'process' and not of 'product'. However, the willingness of colleges and moderators to allow the use of methods such as case-studies and previously seen materials varied greatly between colleges, as the experience of members of staff from both colleges who attended courses and compared notes about their

courses with staff from other colleges, and the contents of the various "Annual Review of Standards" produced by BTEC, testified. For example, there was said to be widespread evidence at all levels of courses of

"concentration in assignment tasks and exam questions involving merely the presentation of facts or an explanation of principles.." (BEC January 1980)

The responsibility given to colleges for the development of course materials within broad guidelines established by BTEC and the loss of central control which this implies, might lead one to expect that BTEC would have taken a high degree of control over the operation of its courses through a centrally set examination which would determine the type of knowledge to be tested and which would therefore act as a more direct control on teachers. (Such considerations can be seen in the design of the General National Vocational Qualification which is based upon similar approaches to teaching and learning as BTEC specifications but which demands that students sit a formal examination at the end - a victory for neo-conservatives and the concern for standards)

The use of such an examination in BTEC courses would be contrary to a number of aspects of BTEC policy: first, the stated desire to make the courses reflect the needs of local industry; secondly, such a strategy would mean that the focus of the courses would be the knowledge content rather than the process of following the course and would therefore lead to the development of teacher centred courses such as those which exist for the professional bodies. Chapter 5 argued that the emphasis on the 'non-subject' elements of the courses reflected the desire to create a clerical labour market which the analysis of BTEC policy documents indicated was a major intention underlying the development of the courses. Finally,

and related to the second point such an examination would mean that the assessment undertaken would reflect only the student's knowledge and not the other skills and attributes which the courses are intended to develop.

In the absence of the control which a centrally set examination would give, BTEC has attempted to control its courses through the establishment of approval and validation procedures, through which colleges are required to reapply for approval to offer courses, and through the system of moderation. Such procedures which have been adopted do not produce the control over colleges which could be expected in a centrally examined course. An illustration of some of the ways in which this lack of central control has been exploited by the staff in colleges will be given in the subsequent chapters.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined the strategies employed in the attempt to impose a common approach to teaching and learning among teachers. The purpose of this attempt has been to reduce teachers' power over the content of the curriculum and assessment practices and to make courses more responsive to the 'needs' of employers. These 'needs' are framed in terms of facilitating the reform of the clerical labour market. It has been argued that BTEC has never explicitly promoted its policies in terms of an intention to facilitate reform of the clerical labour market. Consequently the strategies employed by BTEC have never attempted to persuade teachers of the merits of changing their practice, rather structures have been set in place to 'police' the implementation of policy.

The nature of the changes to the teacher's role implied by the demands of BTEC courses has been examined. It has been argued that the new role

demands a different pedagogic paradigm - a different attitude towards the purpose of teaching and its relationship with knowledge - on the part of teachers. The dominant paradigm held by business studies teachers employed on 'traditional' courses is that of teacher as subject specialist. The role demanded of teachers in BTEC courses is incompatible with such a self image and the ambiguities in BTEC policy arising out of the failure to 'win the hearts and minds' of teachers has allowed teachers who are least likely to describe their role in terms of responding to the demands of industry to gain influence.

This chapter has examined the strategies adopted by BTEC for ensuring the implementation of the type of curriculum change which BTEC courses imply, and argued that the main strategy has been one of power/coercion. The role of moderators as agents of curriculum change has been examined and it has been argued that the sporadic nature of their contact with colleges and the differences in interpretation of their roles has meant that they have not been effective in producing any uniformity of practice in colleges. A full evaluation of the success of the 'BTEC project' must take account of the reactions of teachers and students in colleges. The evidence presented in the following chapter illustrates the ways in which staff have interpreted and responded to the demands of BTEC courses. Chapter 9 illustrates the resistance of students to the demands of their teachers' interpretation of BTEC courses and the nature of work. Overall the intention is to provide an account of the complex ways in which the experience of FE contributes prepares young people to take up an appropriate place in the work force.

The following chapters describe and offer an explanation of the variety of practice and an evaluation of the differences in the BTEC courses offered



in the two colleges.

## Notes

1. One teacher who had been involved in the pilot scheme for the 1992 BTEC National course described her reaction to the demands of the new course exactly in terms of her horror at being asked to teach an integrated course which 'threatened her identity'.
2. This example is taken from a teaching programme from an Inner City college - not Nash or Wyvern. The treatment of similar issues at Nash College, and the students response to them is discussed in chapter 8.
3. One of the interviewees at Nash College produced a letter of resignation which had been received from a part-time teacher (a Bank Manager) teaching on the professional stage of the Chartered Institute of Bankers courses on the morning of the day on which the interview was conducted. This teacher had resigned because the subject knowledge which he was required to teach would never be used by students. The kind of cases about which students were questioned in their examination papers would never be dealt with at Branch level but would be referred to Head Office. There was therefore no relationship between the knowledge which formed the subject matter of the course and that which would be required by students to function effectively in their daily work. However, the extent to which they could demonstrate a command of this knowledge in an examination would determine whether or not they would be admitted

to membership of the professional body, such membership being the minimum requirement for career progression.

## CHAPTER 7

### THE TEACHERS' RESPONSE

#### INTRODUCTION

In the first part of this thesis it was argued that the design of BTEC Business studies courses represent an intention to anticipate and facilitate changes in the clerical labour market. These changes reflected assumptions about the design of clerical work in the future which envisaged the creation of a clerical labour force equipped with general clerical 'skills' which would be transferable between occupations. Changes in the labour market would demand changes in both the content (what was learned) and form (how it was learned) of courses followed by clerical workers. Hence in chapter 3, BTEC and other vocational courses were characterised as being both content and context free: the courses were intended to promote generalised low level skills which would be useful in a wide range of occupations.

In the previous chapter it was argued that the successful accomplishment of BTEC's intentions required teachers to adopt a different approach to teaching and learning - a different pedagogic paradigm. It was argued that the traditional orientation to teaching and learning held by teachers was that of subject specialist: such an approach is incompatible with the demands of the design of BTEC courses. The previous chapter examined the range of control mechanisms which BTEC had established in order to promote change in colleges and to check on the extent to which change had been adopted. The intention was to promote a uniform approach to teaching and learning in all colleges. In effect the intention was to deskill

teachers, reducing their role to that of implementing courses which had been designed elsewhere - an issue taken up in chapter 8.

This chapter argues that, despite the range of intervention by BTEC in colleges, there is no uniformity of practice amongst teachers of BTEC business studies courses. Paradoxically, such uniformity is absent exactly because of certain features of the design of BTEC courses. While such courses have the intention of promoting employers interests in the longer term, through facilitating the creation of an external clerical labour market, BTEC also requires teachers in colleges to be responsive to the demands of local employers. There is an abstract relationship between the design of the courses and the operation of the existing clerical labour market. This abstraction gives rise to a disjunction between the longer term interests of employers, as expressed in the design of BTEC business studies courses, and their short term demands as articulated directly to colleges. This disjunction allows teachers a degree of flexibility and discretion in their interpretation of their roles which allows them to retain a degree of control over their day to day practice.

Within the two colleges where field work was undertaken, groups of teachers had developed different interpretations of their roles. This chapter examines and illustrates the different justifications offered by the staff for the differing practices between each college. The differing views held by teachers of the aims and purposes of the courses and the relationship between their courses and the future roles of their students as workers and citizens are examined. The relationship between these views and three elements of course design within each college are explored: the response to the demands of BTEC to involve local employers in the design of their courses, the development of "skills" in the courses and the design

of assessment. It is argued that within each college a consistent justification was offered for the courses which amounted to clearly identifiable team cultures. These team cultures reflected the differing views of the purpose of FE held by teachers within each college. The chapter concludes by arguing that, despite the 'educational' justification offered for the course at Nash college, the nature of the course there promotes attitudes which are sought by employers. This occurs because the relationship between the courses and the labour market is not the functional one envisaged by BTEC but a credentialist one.

### BTEC Course Specifications

BTEC National courses have a common design framework which is specified centrally: the number of Modules and the 'Indicative Content' for each module of the National level course is specified by BTEC, which also issues guidance on Implementation of the course. While the intention is to limit the discretion of teachers, the precise manner in which these specifications and guidelines are translated in to practice is a matter of interpretation in each college. Such interpretation reflects the attitudes of teachers to many matters relating to their role. The differing attitudes in Nash and Wyvern Colleges will be highlighted in the sections that follow.

All BTEC Higher courses are devised in detail by college staff, within broad guidelines on structure and content. In devising the courses and preparing the submission to be made to BTEC, colleges are required to pay attention to BTEC's published guidelines on various aspects of course design, assessment strategies, teaching and learning etc. Approval to offer all three levels of BTEC Business courses was held in Nash College and First and National level Courses were approved and running in Wyvern College. The fieldwork for this study was concerned mainly with

National level courses although teachers who taught on the BTEC Higher course at Nash College were also interviewed. The interviews revealed the differing justifications which were offered for the courses in terms of their relationship with the labour market.

### JUSTIFYING COURSES

Teachers in BTEC National teams at both colleges indicated that they considered that the teams they worked in shared an understanding of the purposes of the course. It became apparent in the course of the interviews that this was the case, although the views expressed within each team indicated that the justification offered for the course at each college was quite different.

Hence, an analysis of the interview data revealed that within the team of teachers at Wyvern College the prime justification which was offered for their courses was a vocational one:

"I think it's primarily to meet the needs of employers, so that at the end of the day a student can go out and they will know what employers are talking about, so they will be able to slip quicker into a job." (Lecturer J, Wyvern College)

"[W]e are supposed to be developing technicians for the future and what we do has got to be realistic to industry's needs" (Lecturer T, Wyvern College)

A number of teachers also mentioned that the courses reflected the 'real world' of business. However, despite justifying their courses on the basis of their vocational relevance, teachers also recognised that their interpretation was not necessarily what employers wanted:

"..employers have not yet got hold of the difference between learning lists of facts which will probably be forgotten shortly afterwards and acquiring skills which will probably last

that student a lifetime." (Lecturer M, Wyvern College)

".. employers don't know that we are meeting their needs, and well, that's poor marketing for them." (Lecturer J, Wyvern College)

The teachers of BTEC courses at Wyvern College were offering a justification for their practice which accepted that employers do not recognise the value to them of a course which the staff regard as essentially a vocational course. In these courses BTEC requirements become a substitute for employers' requirements and the staff substitute their own judgements of employers needs for the judgement of employers themselves - a position which has parallels with earlier remarks concerning the role of state agencies in supplanting the views of employers. The course had neither a coherently articulated educational justification, nor a mechanism through which to identify and adapt the courses to the 'needs' of local employers. In these circumstances with their position as Business Studies teachers being dependent, in the majority of cases, on their previous work experience, the staff at Wyvern College had constructed a justification for their course which drew upon BTEC philosophy as far as it was consistent with their previous experience - hence the emphasis on 'skills' was seen as an attempt to reflect the 'real world' and the nature of the skills demanded reflected those which the teachers themselves had used in their work experience: a teacher who had worked in an office with an uneven flow of work emphasised the 'skill' of managing one's workload, whereas a teacher who had been in Personnel Management emphasised 'man-management' (sic) skills. It was argued in part 1 of this thesis that the design of BTEC business studies courses was intended to facilitate changes in the clerical labour market. The evidence gathered from field work was that, in the absence of any clear guidance from BTEC about what this would mean in practice, teachers interpreted

BTEC's requirements in terms of their own work experience. There was no evidence that teachers were aware of, or had consciously endorsed or rejected, BTEC's vision of the labour market of the future.

The buoyant local employment market operated to prevent the most obvious kind of sanction being imposed on the college, should there have been any dissatisfaction amongst employers with the way in which the courses were being run. As one teacher commented:

"I don't think you can judge [our course] on the numbers of students that are getting jobs because our BTEC students have always got jobs regardless of how the courses are changing.." (Lecturer H, Wyvern College)

In Nash College, on the other hand, the emphasis was on what was seen as the 'educational' justification for the courses. There was an almost reluctant acceptance that the courses had to be about business:

"We're aiming at developing ... the sorts of skills that will help them develop along their own lines, many of them see it in business and for that reason we accommodate them but I don't see it necessarily in business myself." (Lecturer S, Nash College)

This did not prevent the inclusion of consciously political material<sup>[1]</sup> in the course as far as was possible, given the hostility (discussed in chapter 8) which students and employers expressed towards material which was seen as not appropriate to a Business studies course. Hence the course included an assignment on the nature and extent of class divisions in Britain, a section on co-operatives and another that contained activities relating to Trade Union organisation which used, among other sources, materials from the TUC concerning supporting striking hospital workers.

For the teachers at Nash College the purpose of the course was not



perceived as simply to meet the needs of employers but to help in students' personal development in their lives outside of work. The purpose of the course was most often expressed in terms of making young people more effective at solving problems both in their personal lives and at work, which was the 'official' aim of the course as expressed in the handbook given to students. This then became the rationale for the design of the course: if students were to become more effective at solving problems then they would need to actively participate in attempting to solve problems in course activities. It was because this belief that the courses would benefit the students and contribute to their development if they took part in the course activities was widely shared by the course team that they were prepared to accept that the design of the course would impose limitations on their autonomy - see the discussion in chapter 8. The course was seen as existing for the students' benefit and there was a general agreement that the benefit would be maximised through students taking part in activity based learning.

"I don't think [the courses] are tailored to any particular industry or even to industry; that's my personal opinion. In the way I've seen it run it's tailored to the needs of the students.. whatever they go on to do, I think BTEC is a positive thing for them to do." (Lecturer K, Nash College)

These differences in approach within colleges reflect differences in the Professional ideologies of the teachers who taught on the courses. The BTEC teachers interviewed lacked a single, easily definable professional Ideology. The differences in the way in which teachers saw their roles was reflected in the different attitudes towards the course and in the variety of practices adopted. Such attitudes and practices were not randomly distributed - there were clearly identifiable 'Cultures' within the separate course teams interviewed. The diversity, and also the grouping

of attitudes can be illustrated with reference to three aspects of the courses about which teachers were questioned - involving employers, the development of skills, and assessment practices.

### Involving Employers

As indicated in chapter 5, the process of applying for approval from BTEC to run any course requires that the college identifies the extent of consultation that has taken place with employers and the arrangements for involving employers in the future development of the course.

All teachers interviewed were asked about their reaction to the requirement to involve employers in course design. A typical response to this question at Nash College was that such involvement was a good thing as it benefited the college. Having access to employers in a forum devoted to discussing BTEC courses would allow the college to explain to employers the nature of its courses and to reduce the kinds of criticisms which it had encountered previously concerning the course content and the teaching methods employed:

"I don't think [employer involvement] is a bad thing; but on the other hand I don't think its necessarily a very useful thing ... I would be happy to have employer involvement because I think you might well educate one or two who come along.." (Lecturer D, Nash College)  
(Similar sentiments were expressed by the BTEC Higher Moderator at the same college).

Nash College had set up a BTEC National consultative committee which included members of the college staff and a number of employers representatives (in practice the majority of external members were YTS Managing agents, given that most students following the day release National Certificate - 17 out of 25 - were YTS Trainees). The minutes produced from this committee showed that the major concern of the

external members about course content was that the courses did not pay enough attention to basic accounting practices. The college staff on the other hand were concerned to justify their course design in terms of the skills which students would develop. The emphasis which was placed on skills in the course by the teachers at Nash College meant that they could deflect to some extent the criticisms of the relevance of the course content - such criticisms could always be met with the argument that the course was aimed at developing skills and it was these skills that were relevant. Should employers take issue with such an approach then it was easy to 'pass the buck' by arguing that the responsibility for it lay with BTEC who had arrived at their conclusions after consultation with employers. The teachers' greater knowledge of BTEC's requirements was a resource which they could use to defend their practice against the demands of local employers.

Such a position results from the abstraction underlying the design of BTEC courses. It was argued in chapter 5 that the design of the courses represents an intention to promote employers perceived longer term interests rather than their short term demands: they reflect a concern with the state of an idealised labour market in the future rather than with the labour market as currently organised. Despite the commitment to realism and relevance which is enshrined in BTEC courses and other courses such as TVEI, the view of the labour market and practices within it on which such initiatives are based is marked more by its abstraction than its realism (Moore 1988). The abstraction becomes apparent when the employers whose interests the courses are intended to serve do not recognise the practices involved as meeting their short term requirements for appropriately trained workers. Such abstractions pose difficulties in theorising the relationship between practices in FE and in the economy

and also highlight the difficulties implicit in BTEC's overall project. Other features of the abstract nature of the intentions and assumptions about the operation of the labour market will be discussed later in this chapter.

The course at Nash college appeared to have changed very little in response to any matters raised at the employers' liaison committee. On the contrary, the staff used it to explain the course aims and to announce changes to the course rather than to respond to initiatives from employers. The emphasis which employers placed on the specific knowledge content of the course and the unwillingness of the course team to change the course in response to these kinds of criticism reflects both the findings of preliminary research into the training of clerical workers conducted for this thesis - that the vast majority receive no training other than "Sitting Next to Nellie" and that in-house clerical training has not moved in the direction of general transferable skills - and the experience of teachers at both colleges:

"..we actually took [students] out to firms and they interviewed each others' employers as part of their examination. And an employer said 'well, this doesn't help my student a bit because what I wanted is somebody who is going to be good on the computer and at accounts and I can't see any point in this for my student - although I can see it for other students.' "  
(Lecturer T, Wyvern College)

BTEC course design is based upon promoting employers long term interest through facilitating the operation of an (idealised) external labour market where clerical workers are equipped with transferable skills. Nonetheless the demands of real employers of employers of clerical labour are not expressed in terms of such transferable skills. As the teacher quoted on page 112 indicated, the demands of employers was expressed in

terms of traditional subject matter. Such demands reflect the use of qualifications as credentials rather than revealing a concern with the content of the qualification as BTEC's functionalist model suggests.

At Wyvern College there were no formal means for consulting employers about BTEC courses in particular, although there was a Business Consultative Committee which was meant to act as a liaison between the college and local employers - such committees are widely regarded as ineffective and in many colleges have ceased to operate. The teachers responsible for part-time BTEC courses at Wyvern College saw the lack of a formal consultative committee specifically for BTEC courses as an aspect of their practice which needed developing. At the time the interviews were conducted the staff were actively discussing the idea of involving employers in curriculum development but no firm decisions had been taken.

In the absence of a formal mechanism for identifying what employers wanted, the course attempted to give:

"..what BTEC want. Well, let me qualify that; what BTEC wants and our interpretation of what BTEC is looking for and our interpretation, I think, of what is required out there." (Lecturer H, Wyvern College)

In terms of assessing the ways in which the experience of FE prepares young people for entry to the labour market we should note that the teachers at Wyvern college were two steps removed from responding to the demands of employers. The courses drew on the teachers' own experience of work in commercial organisations (now somewhat out of date) modified to some extent by the demands of BTEC courses. The demands of BTEC courses were expressed by teachers in both colleges in terms of developing students' skills. What this meant in theory and in

practice varied between colleges.

### SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

The emphasis on developing skills in BTEC and other vocational courses is argued in official policy to be a response to the increased level of skills being demanded of workers in the future. Such arguments are inconsistent with the analysis offered in chapter 5 of the consequences for levels of skills in jobs where new technology has been introduced and represent a further abstraction in the design of the courses.

The use of the term "skills" in BTEC publications was analysed in chapter 5 where it was argued that the term is used to cover personal qualities, the abilities necessary to apply knowledge to solve problems and also cognitive skills of analysis and abstraction. Given this 'flexible' use of the term there is no uniform agreement about, or understanding of, what is meant by the term 'skill' in the colleges in which BTEC courses operate. The result is that staff in colleges interpret the emphasis on skills in BTEC courses in a variety of ways.

Most of the teachers interviewed spontaneously mentioned the importance attached to skills as a significant feature of BTEC courses. The honorific associations of the term skill - who could say that developing skills was not a desirable objective for education - whether used in BTEC specifications or any other context, allows staff in colleges to rationalise their own practices. The explicit references to development of skills and the devaluing of 'content' which this is seen to imply (although it was argued in chapter 5 that some BTEC literature does not support this interpretation) allows some staff to interpret their work as 'Progressive' (Bates & Rowland, 1988).

For example, some teachers saw the emphasis on skills in business studies courses as a reflection of developments in the wider educational sphere:

"I think that there is a general move in education to .. remove the emphasis on content and place the emphasis on process. It's just that the way we interpret process in business studies is in terms of skills" (Lecturer D, Nash College)

For such teachers the emphasis on skills meant that they could distance themselves from the potential criticisms that the vocational nature of BTEC courses were concerned only with a narrow training. The notion of skills development allowed them to argue that such courses were different only in degree from other courses, in effect to straddle the perceived training/ educational divide:

"You are really developing skills in 'A' level candidates, you are probably developing much more higher levels in analytical skills and perhaps less social skills, but they are still there ..you are still developing skills its just different skills and you need the skills approach to teaching." (Lecturer T, Wyvern College)

For others the emphasis on skills allows them to justify their practice on the grounds that they are both meeting the needs of students and of industry; the 'skills approach' can be used by teachers to legitimate their practices when the precise relevance of their teaching to industry might otherwise be called into question:

"What you've got to teach students is the practical approach because that's what Industry wants... I think its very relevant for their future careers.."

But, on the other hand when dealing with students on courses organised by Professional Bodies the same lecturer recognised that such bodies

"are not at all interested in skills. Presumably because [the students] are usually part-timers and they learn skills at work, they don't need to come to college to build skills what they want is the facts." (Lecturer Y, Wyvern College)

While there was a common view of BTEC courses being based on skills, as distinct from courses based on the acquisition of knowledge, what was meant by skills and why they were significant varied greatly:

"The whole emphasis of our course is on developing skills rather than students accumulating knowledge. I mean, they do get knowledge along the way, but its skills that we're really after isn't it? The skills to get themselves organised, skills to meet their deadlines and that sort of thing; and that's exactly what you have to do in business. (Lecturer M, Wyvern College)

Compare this explicitly vocational definition, which identifies 'Skills' as the things which people have to be able to do in business, with the more liberal notion offered by a teacher at Nash college:

"All of them [the students] will benefit from the skills that we emphasise on the course .. I think its a benefit for all the students.. they start to think for themselves and they - I think it will make them more effective in their personal lives as well as in their work lives.." (Lecturer I, Nash College)

The importance attached to the development of skills by the teachers above reflects the different views held by these two teachers of their role; in the first case the teacher's role is seen as fitting students for their place in business whereas in the second case the role is seen as much more concerned with the development of the student as an individual. As the extracts from BTEC publications given in Chapter 5 show, each teacher could appeal to BTEC for support for their position.

While the views expressed by teachers about their work was not internally consistent a pattern emerged from the field work in the two colleges in the way in which staff discussed their work on BTEC courses. This pattern tended to reflect the dichotomy illustrated above in relation to "skills" - in Nash College the staff tended to emphasise the educational aspects of the



course, stressing the personal development of students and their active participation in course work as being desirable for its own sake rather than offering a vocational justification for such features of the courses. In Wyvern, on the other hand, staff tended to emphasise the close relationship between the courses on offer and the "needs" of industry:

"[The most significant feature of BTEC courses is] skills development as opposed to learning a body of information. Practical work; industrial - relating practical work to industrial, real industrial needs and real industrial, realistic industrial situations ... " (Lecturer T, Wyvern College)

The purpose here has been simply to illustrate the varieties of meanings which has been attributed to the term "skills" and the potential for teachers to select and emphasise certain aspects of the term in order to justify their practices. The extracts have shown how the term has been interpreted in different ways by staff and used to justify their practices which support their understanding of their role as teachers - as responding to the needs of industry or as educators. This theme is developed in the next section.

### Assessment

The emphasis which the staff at the two colleges placed on aspects of assessment varied quite considerably and embodied the values which underpinned the whole of the course design. At Nash College a typical response to a question about the purpose of Assessment was that it provided feedback for the student about their progress and was part of the learning process:

"The importance of assessment is what you say [to the student] rather than the grade you give. That assessing a student's performance tells him something and teaches him something... if he comes across a similar situation again he will perform better." (Lecturer P, Nash College)

Teachers at Wyvern College had adopted an approach to assessment which put the emphasis much more on 'testing' the student rather than helping her/him to learn; the justification offered was more likely to be derived from a vocational rather than an educational ideology: the motivation for assessment was more likely to be expressed in terms of the usefulness of the results of assessment in classifying and differentiating students and providing information about how they are likely to perform in work tasks

"..I think probably employers are interested to know what their students can do in the way of skills ... I think that BTEC has possibly moved too far away from ..[time constrained assessments] because there is a need in industry, out there in the big wide world to work under pressure to get things done in an hour or two..." (Lecturer H, Wyvern College)

"It's more realistic, isn't it, for what the students are wanting out of the course and what the employers are wanting, of course." (Lecturer T, Wyvern College)

The crucial question is to what extent do these differences in the justification offered for the courses have an effect on the young peoples' attitudes towards work and to the relationship between the colleges and the labour market. The first question will be addressed later in this chapter, while the issue of the relationship between practices in colleges and the labour market are examined in the next section.

### Placing Occupations

It was suggested in chapter 5 that the features of BTEC courses design represented an attempt to move from a credentialist to a functionalist relationship between qualifications and occupations. The credentialist model characterises the relationship simply in terms of the distribution of qualifications. The credentialist model argues that the educational system performs an allocative function by differentiating students according to

their qualifications and provides a device which employers can use in recruiting to various levels in the occupational hierarchy. In such a model the content of educational qualifications is less important than their distribution. In the functionalist model by contrast the content of educational qualifications is of primary concern: the curriculum should provide young people with the necessary skills and knowledge for entry to particular positions within the occupational hierarchy.

The relationship between practices in educational establishments (whether that is seen as education or training) and the economy is not simply the similarities or differences between the nature of the knowledge used in each sphere - the degree of direct preparation for work through the transmission of *specific* knowledge which would be useful in any particular job is very limited. However, an important aspect of the relationship is that between the hierarchies of both structures: the qualifications necessary for entry into occupations need not have any direct relation to what is technically necessary to perform the work in question. Rather, the function of particular qualifications in recruitment may just be to place the occupation in relation to others. (Hussain 1981)

The experience of the staff interviewed seemed to confirm the continuing use of educational qualifications as selection criteria with which to restrict the number of potential applicants rather than reflecting the technical skills necessary to carry out the job in question:

"...on secretarial courses we constantly get employers asking that secretaries be able to do shorthand and yet they hardly ever use that ability that the secretaries have. So why do they want secretaries to do shorthand? Because in the past the best secretaries used to be the ones with the best shorthand qualifications; so now they're saying 'we want someone with good shorthand qualifications' because they

think they're going to get a better secretary but it's irrelevant and they just haven't got it sorted out.." (Lecturer M, Wyvern College)

The design of vocational courses reflects the assumptions of a neo-liberal view of the labour market in which all types of worker are assumed to compete with each other for available jobs (Ashton et al. 1991). This perspective on the labour market assumes that it is the actions of the individual job seeker which determine success in the market - both the likelihood of her/his gaining a job and the quality of that job. The assertion is that possession of qualifications (preferably vocational ones) will give the job seeker a 'competitive edge' when applying for jobs and will determine the type of job eventually gained - the better the qualifications, the better the job. This perspective conflicts with the experience of young people in the labour market and research into employers' recruitment strategies, which will be briefly outlined below.

### Young people in the Labour Market

Evidence suggests that, rather than the existence of a single labour market in which all workers compete, there are a number of segmented labour markets in which different types of workers compete for different types of jobs. One primary division in the labour market is between the youth and adult labour market: employers make decisions to either exclude young people from certain jobs or to positively discriminate in favour of them for others: jobs for which adults and young people compete are the minority of those available on the labour market at any one time (Ashton et al. 1991). The youth labour market itself is further segmented and sub-divided (Ashton et al. 1987); these further sub-divisions reflect both the career patterns associated with particular jobs (jobs in internal and external labour markets, discussed in chapter 4) and the gender and ethnicity of the young person entering the labour market.

The simple relationship between qualifications and employment which underlies the public debates about vocational courses conflicts with the findings about the ways in which employers use qualifications when recruiting. Rather than ranking young people in terms of their potential productivity as indicated by their qualifications, employers consciously use different criteria to determine entry to each of the segments of the labour market, which prevents young people moving between segments. When recruiting for managerial and clerical jobs, most employers ask for specific educational qualifications often because they are demanded by professional bodies as a prerequisite for further qualifications. When recruiting for skilled manual jobs some employers were found to ask for certain qualifications, again this was often to meet the demands of local colleges which set the entry criteria for courses - in both of these cases the employers were asking for qualifications to meet the requirements of others, not because they were related to the demands of the job to be performed. It is also worth noting that the qualifications were academic and not vocational. For certain types of job - e.g. unskilled manual and sales jobs - employers used educational qualifications to *disqualify* young people, seeing the possession of qualifications as indications that young people would be dissatisfied with the routine nature of the jobs on offer. (based on Ashton et al. 1987 pp164-170)

If qualifications are used simply as benchmarks and a method of restricting applications for a particular post then the content of the qualification becomes irrelevant. In such a case the differences which have been noted between the courses at the two colleges do not matter in terms of their relationship with the economic system - both produce students equipped with qualifications which allow them to appear as formally similar and to compete for similar jobs in the labour market.

Despite the clearly differing weight attached by the staff to vocational and educational justifications for their courses, the end result is the same: students holding qualifications which, whether or not they hold any relevance to the practice of 'business', are seen by employers as qualifying their holders for consideration for particular levels of jobs. The qualifications are necessary but not sufficient conditions for selection for such jobs. However, this conclusion is important in terms of the analysis of the purpose of BTEC courses offered in the first part of this thesis. If qualifications are used simply as credentials and it is their distribution which is of significance to employers then the attempt by BTEC to use qualifications to promote changes in the labour market will not be effective. If employers are not concerned with the content of qualifications as the evidence offered here suggests, changes to the nature of qualifications will not change employers' labour market behaviour.

#### Attitudes and dispositions

A number of studies indicate that the value of educational qualifications for an employer may be that they give an indication of desirable attitudes and dispositions. (see for example Wellington 1987) Similarly, the lack of qualifications may also be seen by an employer to indicate that a potential employee will be suitable for a boring and repetitive job.

(Ashton, Maguire & Spilsbury 1987). Collins (1979) quotes studies by Thomas (1956) and Drake et. al. (1972) in support of the contention that

"..employers generally do not select employees on the basis of their school grades; rather they look for the completion of a degree in particular subjects and especially for diffuse 'personality' characteristics" (Collins 1979 )

In relation to Further Education it has been argued that while apprentices do not necessarily acquire the job skills needed for the type of tasks

demanding of them in a changing industry, their college courses do develop 'appropriate' attitudes and work habits, which are more important than the actual skills acquired (Gleeson and Mardle 1980).

It would be easy to argue that, given the explicitly vocational justification offered for the course there, students attending Wyvern College developed more appropriate attitudes to their positions in employment, than did students at Nash College where the course was justified in terms of its educational benefit. Such a conclusion would be easy, but misleading. In order to develop this argument it is necessary to return to the comments recorded in chapter 6 about the freedom granted to teachers by BTEC courses.

The earlier chapter indicated that teachers at both colleges had identified the freedom to decide upon and to develop course materials as a significant feature of BTEC courses. It was remarked at the time that this freedom meant freedom for teachers and not for students. In neither college was there any disruption of the underlying traditional power relationships between teachers and taught.

".. I'm not sure that we actually do allow ourselves to be out of control. I think that they might be out of the room, but I don't think this necessarily means that they are out of our control ... what I am saying is that we write in little checks and balances, so that at the end of the day it is us that is running the activities."  
(Lecturer D, Nash College)

"..[W]e can talk about the impact and implications of the balance of payments .. and then I send them away to find out the figures, or occasionally they can do a little bit of interpretation as and when I think they are ready for it" (Lecturer Y, Wyvern College)

This description of their practices offered by the teachers involved indicates that the students were given greater responsibility for the

organisation of their work. However the students exercise no fundamental control over the content and direction of the tasks which they are required to perform (Baxter 1987). The BTEC courses in these colleges did not produce the increased discretion for students which Bernstein (1980) suggested would arise in integrated courses. Teachers have retained control over what is to be done by students while giving them greater responsibility for carrying out those tasks:

" I found like, you had to take a lot of responsibility yourself - which at college you do any way - you know it was like your responsibility if you did the work and got it in. You know, no-one was chasin' you up all the time which is really good in a way, because it disciplines you and that's what you need later on in life." (Vicky, Full-time year 2)

The student centred nature of the course has given students greater responsibility for participating in the learning activities *decided on by the teachers*. Nothing which happens in such courses challenges the right of the teacher to determine the overall structure of the course. The control of teachers over the courses reflects the control of the Labour Process by the employer/manager at work.

"..in both areas it is possible to develop control strategies where teachers/managers cede control over the immediate tasks of pupils/workers while retaining overall control at the level of planning and ultimate goals." (Baxter 1987)

### CONSENT AND CONTROL

While the practices of teachers in colleges cannot be reduced to, or derived from, practices in the economy, there is a striking similarity between certain practices of control in the colleges and in industry. In neither clerical work nor in colleges dealing with BTEC National level students does control depend upon direct supervision; rather the strategies depend on the exercise of 'responsible autonomy' (Edwards 1979) by



students and clerical workers (cf Buswell 1988). Whilst all control strategies depend upon a balance between coercion and consent (Littler and Salaman 1982) the strategies to be discussed here emphasise the development of consent as the exercise of control in both settings depends upon the development of consent in the student/worker to the regime under which they must work. It is important to emphasise at the outset that no conspiracy or correspondence theory is being propounded. The features of the course described below arose out of the teachers' desire to give students as much information as possible about their course in order to make the processes as open as possible. In doing so they drew upon strategies which were used to control their own (i.e. the teachers') work (cf. Giddens 1984, Shilling 1992).

### Bureaucratic Control

The similarities between the control strategies in both spheres arise out of the internal bureaucratic organisation of colleges and the bureaucratic control (Edwards 1979) exercised by employers. The organisation of BTEC National Courses has increased the explicitly bureaucratic nature of the students relationship with colleges. In Nash College for example, the students were given a course handbook which gave details of the course and also set out the regulations relating to assessment. The detailing of assessment criteria which staff would use to grade assignments and the opportunity given to students to repeat assignments which they had not passed at the first attempt, the rules relating to the submission of late assignments and other matters clearly identified the impersonal force of the rules by which the course would be run and control operated. In disputes about the operation of the course, members of staff frequently referred students to the handbook for support in resolving the dispute. The dispute then became a matter of interpretation of the meaning of the

rules contained in the handbook rather than a dispute about who wrote the handbook in the first place and whether the rules it contained had any force other than statements of intent by the teachers:

"Interviewer: Have you ever challenged the teachers about [any of the perceived problems with the course]?"

Student: Yeah, I have Yeah, Several times.

Interviewer: And what's the result been?

Student: That's the programme, basically. Yeah, that's what we have to do.

Interviewer: And how do you feel about that?

Student: If that's what they say that's the way its got to be. There's no point in carrying on about it.

There is conflict over the application of particular rules and procedures in the workplace which are established as part of the strategy of bureaucratic control. However, such conflict does not threaten the overall structure by which the labour process is controlled (Edwards 1979). The control exercised by teachers/managers is never complete, there is resistance to their directions through the conflict over the interpretation of the rules they establish. What must be re-emphasised is that this conflict recognises the right of the 'authorities' to make the rules in the first place.

The course structures in these two colleges can be seen as reinforcing the right of those in authority to make the rules and to legitimate the right of the employer to direct the work of the individual employee. Such reinforcement takes place not through the nature of the knowledge that constitutes the content of the courses, which many analyses of BTEC courses see as important (Dickinson and Erben 1983, Lander 1983), but through the control exercised by teachers over the activities of students:

"[W]ell I accept them [the rules] because it's like if you're at work .. you accept it, 'cause you've been given a deadline, and if you don't get it done by the deadline you get sacked.." (André, full time year 1)

Thus the inclusion of explicitly 'political' material in the course at Nash College is of less importance than the fact that it is the teachers who decide that that material is to be there in the first place. The real political issue remains the teachers' control of the students 'work'.

### GRADING BEHAVIOUR

Bureaucratic control uses both positive rewards and negative sanctions to promote the desired behaviour. The distinguishing feature of bureaucratic control is the incentives it contains which reward behaviour which is consistent with the system of control and not related solely to the quality or quantity of work. There were clearly elements of this present in the courses at both colleges. In Nash College for example, the students were given a timetable which indicated the dates on which their assignments had to be completed and handed in. Failure to hand in the assignment on the appropriate date without an acceptable reason meant that the student would receive only a Pass grade no matter how good the assignment might be. In this college the system of grading was that each assignment was graded as 'Pass' or 'Good pass' and the overall grade<sup>[2]</sup> was determined by the teachers at the end of the course by taking into account the student's performance in all elements of the course. Reproduced below is the explanation of the system for determining grades given to students in the student handbook:

"At the end of each year we will give an overall grade to your achievement in each Unit. In deciding this grade we will look at your grades in the Assignment Programme, your grade in the Examination Assignment / Exam and also your overall performance in the course during the year; for example, how well you have participated in class activities, the amount of

effort and enthusiasm you have devoted to the course, the support which you have shown to your colleagues etc. You should be clear therefore that every activity on the course is important and not just those which are formally assessed."

There was mixed evidence about the effects which this system of grading had on students behaviour: some argued that they had modified their behaviour in response:

"When you realise that what you do in class does count, then you start to think a little bit more about what you're doing and how you present yourself" (Heather, Full-time year 2)

Whilst others indicated that the system had no effect on the way in which they performed on the course:

"I behave the way that I feel that day, you know. If I'm in a knackered mood, I'll just sit there and let the world go by.." (Alison Part-time year 2)

"Probably if it did I would've done better. But I don't know quite what I would've done. No, I'll just be my self and that's it. Some nights I don't feel like it and don't open my mouth and can't be bothered, I'm either too tired or fed up with the subject, not at all interested and, I mean, I'll let them know that, if I think that's the case." (Julie, Part-time Year 2)

Despite the views expressed by students about the influence the effects of the system of assessment on their behaviour, the system does operate and is used by the teachers and has a consequent effect on the grades which students receive:

"[I forgot about it] in the last year, but now, since I got my grades back and I thought: 'I didn't expect a Merit in that', you know, I should've got a Pass. Then I thought that it must have been my classwork contribution you know, and apparently that's shifted all of my marks up. So I'm really thinking about making a, really, greater contribution in class now, to get a Distinction instead of a Merit." (Lyndsey, Full-time Year 2)

The final grade that a student receives depends on behaviour which is relevant to the control system and not simply the quality or quantity of work produced. The system of reward and penalties employed mean that in order to achieve success on this course a student would need to have displayed considerable commitment - more than is the case on a traditional course organised by a professional body - to have taken responsibility for her/his own progress through the course, to have taken an active part in class activities the relevance of which to her/his job may not be immediately clear to the student, to have been able to respond flexibly to unfamiliar problems and to have been reliable and produced work at regular intervals at her/his own initiative. Thus, what is being assessed in BTEC courses extends far beyond the students command of a body of knowledge and ability to demonstrate competences which has been the traditional concern of assessment, and can be seen to extend to the work traits associated with bureaucratic organisations: predictability, dependability, rule orientation and internalisation of goals (Buswell 1988). Hence the course rewards and encourages attitudes which are valued in the current organisation of the clerical labour process. There was no evidence that the teachers set out to develop the types of attitudes which were argued in part 1 of this thesis to be central to the design of the courses. The courses are structured and 'managed' in a way which reflected the teachers own experience of work. Compare the attitudes of the following students, the first who successfully completed the course and the second who failed (although recognised by his teachers as being more than capable of reaching the required standard):

"Like, when you're going to work all week and you've got 2 or 3 assignments, and you can't understand why they're giving you them all at one go. You start to get a bit annoyed about it, you know ... you've got to go to work tomorrow and, oh Christ, you've got to get this done .. and then when its handed in you get a

fail and you've got to start doing it again ... [you] just get on with the work ... you've just got to." (Greg Part-time Year 2)

"I'd much rather do an exam than do the assessment lark. 'Cause I can't get myself involved in the assessment, in the course work... I set myself time aside to do the course work ..and then I think 'what the hell' and can't be bothered. I'll go to the pub or watch TV or something...So, the way I work, I tend to think I do perform better under pressure... before I know where I am I'm up to my neck in back dated assignments." (Mark Part-time year 2)

The student who passed did so not because the quality of his work was better than that of the student who failed, or because he was of greater 'ability' (however defined); he passed because he was better able to adjust to the demands of the control system. These demands were that assessed work should be produced regularly, on time and without constant supervision.

The students on the course appeared to have formed a realistic understanding of the demands of the course and the attributes necessary to succeed:

"If you're not well motivated don't do a BTEC. If you're not well motivated but you're clever do 'A' levels. And I think I am on the whole fairly well motivated because I think I did manage to get every single one of my assignments in on time last year .. but, yeah, I think, as I said, you have to be motivated to do this course, you have to be motivated. Even if you're not very clever you can still do this course if you're motivated.." (John Full-time year 2)

There is a striking similarity between Edwards' account of bureaucratic control as:

"..a much more totalitarian system - .. in the sense of involving the total behaviour of the worker." (Edwards 1979)

and Bernstein's proposition, which seems to be validated by the practice at

Nash College, that:

"..a new range of pupil attitudes become candidates for labels...more of the pupil is available for control. As a result the socialisation could be more intensive and perhaps more penetrating." (Bernstein 1980)

The teachers who devised the system of deciding grades for students at Nash College did so from what they saw as proper educational concerns and not from any desire to meet the needs of employers. The intention was to promote a less instrumental attitude towards the course, to encourage students to regard all aspects of their course as important and not just the assessed elements. The system was a compromise position between a proposal not to give grades at all for each assignment but reviewing all aspects of the students performance in order to arrive at an overall grade for the Unit (BTEC demands that there must be such an overall grade) and the established practice of grading each assignment on a 5 point scale. The desire was to remove 'unhealthy'<sup>[3]</sup> competition between students and to encourage them to read the extensive comments (often covering more than 1 side of an A4 proforma sheet) which were written by teachers.

Whatever the intentions of the teachers in devising this system, the consequences are not only that the system rewards students who adhere to the organisational requirements imposed by teachers but also that students learn to accept the legitimacy of the strategies of bureaucratic control which employers also use - this may appear to present a very passive view with no 'resistance' on the part of students but contradictorily this involves learning about the 'ritualisation' of resistance. Those who do best in college will be those who most closely conform to the requirements of the teachers just as those who wish to do well at work

must conform to the requirements of employers. While there may be resistance to the requirements of teachers/managers such resistance comes to focus on the interpretation of the rules through which bureaucratic control operates and does not call into question the right of the teacher/manager to make those rules in the first place. What is important to note is that in both spheres the behaviour which is rewarded is reliability and predictable performance not necessarily the kind of erratic excellence which might, in the educational sphere, be rewarded in examination oriented courses.

"The sought after worker is less the skilful initiative-taking worker than the worker who will arrive on time, do what he is told and not quit." (Blackburn and Mann 1979 p13)

### Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the mediating role of the staff who go to make up course teams in translating the guidelines offered by BTEC into practice is of greater significance in understanding the nature of BTEC courses within colleges than the success of BTEC in exercising control over teachers' practices. Within each college, teachers were appealing to their particular interpretation of the demands of BTEC to justify their practice and to defend that practice against changes which might be demanded by employers. The differences in the approach to the design and implementation of the courses depended on the selection and emphasis of different elements of the BTEC 'philosophy' - it was the very nature of this 'philosophy' which emphasised the need to respond to local demands within a framework of overall guidelines which provided the flexibility for teachers to impose their own values on the courses. Within each college also, the interpretation which was given to BTEC's



demands reflected the differing values and attitudes towards the purposes of Further Education held by the staff involved.

The BTEC National course teams in both colleges had moved away from a view of the teacher's role as a subject specialist; in both colleges the teaching teams consisted of staff who had weak subject identities. Nonetheless, there were differences in values between the teachers in the two colleges. In Nash College the dominant ideology among the teachers interviewed was that of 'Teacher as Educator' with a very clearly articulated educational justification for their practices. In Wyvern College the dominant ideology was that of 'Teacher as Secondary Socializer' with their role clearly seen as equipping young people with certain features desirable to employers. As many of the extracts given in the course of this chapter have demonstrated, exactly what these features were was not clearly agreed. However, it has been argued that, despite the intention to distance the course at Nash college from the immediate demands of employers, the assessment practices employed unintentionally demanded and rewarded the types of behaviour demanded in bureaucratic organisations. The next chapter offers an account of the strategies used by the teachers at Nash college to preserve their autonomy and control over the day to day practice of their courses.

## Notes

1. It is not contended that the 'normal' content of Business studies courses is not political - the term is used here to mark out the conscious attempt to introduce an alternative perspective to that normally contained in such courses.
2. BTEC requires that students performance in each unit of the course is graded on a scale of Fail, Refer, Pass, Merit, or Distinction. The existence of such a scale on courses which are described by BTEC as 'Criterion Referenced' may be seen as further evidence of the conflicting pressures to which BTEC is attempting to respond. In the latest specification of BTEC First courses (1991) which is framed in terms of student competences colleges are still required to grade the common skills element of the course on the scale from fail to distinction.
3. Taken from a paper on grading given to students by the course team.

## CHAPTER 8

### TEACHING AS A LABOUR PROCESS

#### INTRODUCTION

The chapters in the first part of this thesis argued that underlying many of the changes in the curriculum of schools and colleges was a desire to break the perceived 'producer power' exercised by teachers and other professionals. In order to remove the power exercised by teachers, the intention was to promote the influence of employers both by changes in the curriculum and by changes in the control and governance of schools and colleges. It was noted that the detailed interests of employers in terms of curriculum were articulated by state sponsored bodies - the MSC, NCVQ and, most significantly for this thesis, BTEC.

Chapter 6 illustrated the nature of the mechanisms established by BTEC to intervene in the day to day practice of teachers and to change the nature of the curriculum. Chapter 7 argued that, despite BTEC's intervention, the courses in the colleges in which field work took place reflected wide differences of approach and practice. This chapter examines the ways in which one group of teachers in one of the colleges have sought to retain control over their work, while responding to the requirements of BTEC. The chapter offers an application of labour process theory to the work of teachers in colleges drawing on the explanation of labour process theory offered in chapter 4.

The central theme of this chapter is teacher autonomy. The chapter examines the degree to which the organisation of BTEC courses restricts

the autonomy of teachers by requiring them to work as part of a team and to follow team decisions. The extent to which the changes in the courses offered reflect the success of BTEC in determining the practices of teachers is examined. It is argued that the changes which have taken place are the result of initiatives within the colleges and not evidence of central control exercised by BTEC and monitored by Moderators. The findings show quite different approaches both between and within colleges - the BTEC Higher and BTEC National courses at Nash College were structured and organised quite differently and both were distinct from the National level course at Wyvern College. In order to illustrate the mediating role of teachers in interpreting BTEC's demands the chapter focuses on the differences between the National and Higher level courses offered at Nash college. The pattern of constraints within which the course teams operate is examined and the intention is to show the range of responses to the changes associated with BTEC courses and to indicate the ways in which the courses which are offered are the product of a political process rather than one imposed on colleges by BTEC.

### Team Cultures

The description in the previous chapter illustrated the nature of the justifications offered by the course teams at each college. The course team at Wyvern College emphasised the vocational nature of their course. This view reflected the culture of the whole of the Department of Business Studies at that college - every course which the Department offered had a promotional leaflet which described the course, every such leaflet carried the logo "A course for your career"; thus the ethos of the Department was vocational. However the more interesting case is in the separate cultures in the two course teams in Nash College. The BTEC Higher team had a 'traditional' approach to their work and the dominant self-image was that

of 'teacher as subject specialist'. The National level team on the other hand had adopted more student centred and integrated approaches. The existence of diverse practices within the same college department in courses which are intended by BTEC to be run according to identical principles indicates that BTEC has not been successful in controlling the practices of teachers. Despite the clear intention of BTEC to exercise control over the day-to-day practices of teachers, the differences between the courses in Nash College was the outcome of a political process in the department. The next section describes the differences between the two courses and the following section offers an explanation of the differences. The comments in the following sections relate mainly to the Core Units of the courses.

#### BTEC Higher Certificate Course - Nash College

The Higher level course at this college was a part-time course which students attended for 1 day or two evenings each week. The course consisted of three Core Units and one option unit in each year. The course content appeared in the course specification as clearly differentiated units, in the main the content was clearly identifiable as being drawn from discrete subject areas; where this was not the case the teaching strategies employed meant that what was described in the course specification as an integrated unit was taught by two 'subject' teachers either on a block basis or alternate weeks with clearly identifiable subjects emerging. For example, the core module entitled 'Information for Business' was taught by a Computer studies teacher for two or three weeks and then by an Accounts teacher for a similar block of time. The 'Business Environment' core module was taught on a similar block basis by an Economics teacher and a Lawyer. The dominant self-image of the teachers who taught on this course was that of subject specialist; the internal organisation of the course

modules reflected the concerns of the teachers that students should 'get a good grounding' in their subject specialism.

The teaching methods employed in all units were left to each unit lecturer and the pace and direction of the unit was determined by the unit lecturers in isolation except for the co-operation necessary to plan the programme of Cross Modular Assignments. The team met infrequently and then discussed only the mechanics of the course - a matter criticised by the course moderator.<sup>[1]</sup> There was little or no attempt to plan the course as an integrated whole. As this was a part-time course, it constituted only a small proportion of the class contact time of the teachers who taught on it, and this militated against greater involvement in planning and discussing the course aims. The result was a diversity of practice, clearly differing views of the nature of the course and different levels of commitment to what were (differently) perceived as the objectives of the course. One common opinion which was voiced was that there was no such thing as The BTEC approach, rather that BTEC publications were capable of a number of competing interpretations and that no one of them should be seen as the basis from which to criticise others:

"...Yesterday, for instance, I was chatting to this group and one said to me "the drawback with BTEC is that we're being used as Guinea Pigs". I thought..but this is 10 years after BTEC! it should be quite well established... There are clearly different versions, so there is no consistency...So some teachers, their main concern is the presentation, has the student got into the role? Whereas [for] other teachers the major criterion is the actual content, the actual body of knowledge..." (Lecturer R, BTEC Higher co-ordinator, Nash College)

From the students' perspective the lack of consistency in approach was at best confusing and at worst had produced complete disillusionment with the course in at least two of the students who responded to a questionnaire

concerning the training they had received in the course of their employment. A major part of this disaffection was that the teachers on the course were seen as uninterested in the students; one student claimed that some of the teachers didn't seem to know her name or to be interested in anything other than their own subject matter - a comment which reflects the points made in the previous chapter concerning the low relationship orientation traditionally held by FE teachers observed.

### BTEC National Courses - Nash College

The specification for the Core Units of National level courses was revised by BTEC in 1986.<sup>[2]</sup> The teachers who made up the original Core team at Nash college responded by designing a course structure which built upon what they regarded as the best of their existing practice. From the outset it was intended that teachers would not be seen as subject specialists, but would have to accept responsibility for teaching across the core of the course which was to be delivered as an integrated whole to be called 'Organisational Studies'. The course was designed to be activity based and the activities were to be common to all students whoever was their 'teacher' at any particular time. Teaching in this context meant using a number of student activities from a central resource bank and helping the students to reflect on what their activities had taught them. All teachers would use the same materials which they had not necessarily designed and would have to accept that they would have to follow a course programme which dictated the pattern and timing of the activities which students would follow, and the content and timing of Assignments.

Unlike the BTEC Higher course at the same college, the National level course was relatively 'self-contained' in terms of staffing, the majority of the option modules on the course were taught by the teachers who also

taught the core modules. The teachers also worked on both the part-time and full-time courses which meant that BTEC National courses formed the largest part of their timetables. This meant that there was a greater homogeneity of views about the nature of the course and in the teaching and learning methods adopted than was the case on the Higher level course - the teachers who formed the National level core team all shared the same staffroom and this was felt by them to reinforce their sense of being a team and gave them the opportunity to discuss matters of principle as well as practical details about the course. The result was that the students had a clear idea about the purposes of their course and their role with none of the uncertainties expressed by students on the Higher level course:

"..everyone is involved and you work to remember things...it makes you use you use your brains and work the situation out, not just sat listening to a teacher waffle on..." (Jeff, Part-time year 2)

"The course is run in this way to encourage people to work together, to pool knowledge and listen to other peoples' point of view... People are encouraged to find things out for themselves, it is then remembered more effectively when needed." (Gill, Part-time year 2)

That there was this difference in culture between the two teams reflects differences in the distribution of power within the Department of Business Studies at this college.(cf Cooper 1984, Bates 1989) The next section sketches out the dimensions of these differences.

### COURSES AND RESOURCES

The BTEC Higher team consisted primarily of staff who were graded as Senior Lecturer and above - the higher level grading <sup>[3]</sup> of the course meant that it was high status and consequently sought after work. That it



was the key to progression to higher salary scales for basic grade teachers<sup>[4]</sup>, without the necessity for promotion procedures being followed, meant that there was a reluctance on the part of college management to alter the composition of the team. Appointing a basic grade teacher to the course team brought with it the 'danger' (from management's view) that there would be a loss of teaching hours and an increase in the salary bill - there was also the prospect of criticism from inside and outside of the college that the higher level work was being shared out artificially in order to engineer the transfer of as many teachers as possible to higher scales. Essentially the members of the BTEC Higher team were in a strong position to resist criticisms aimed at them - too vigorous criticisms of the course might cause them to ask to be removed from the team and leave a vacuum to be filled by basic grade teachers with the unwelcome (from the management's perspective) consequences described above. Consequently, therefore, the BTEC Higher team resisted attempts to change the operation of the course, effectively adopting the form of BTEC courses but maintaining the approaches to teaching and learning which had characterised their work on 'traditional' courses.

The BTEC National course team, on the other hand, had adopted a 'non-traditional' approach to teaching and learning on the courses and had accepted the importance of working as a team. At the time the fieldwork for this research was conducted all but one of the teachers on the core of the course were new entrants to teaching since BTEC courses had been introduced into the college; the other teacher transferred to the college from another in the same LEA after BTEC courses had been running in the college, this teacher's previous experience had been as a liberal studies teacher. None of these teachers therefore had any great allegiance to 'traditional' business studies courses. The majority of these teachers, in

fact with only one exception, were 'late developers' - people who have taken a late degree and then entered teaching.

The introduction of BTEC courses to this college had co-incided with the appointment of a new Head of Department (HOD) whose previous job had been at a College of Education. While the HOD did not initiate change he was prepared to be supportive of the kind of curriculum development promoted by the course co-ordinators, justified as it was in 'educational' terms. This meant that the co-ordinators were able to make changes to the staffing over a period of time and to remove the more traditional teachers from the course team; not that such teachers resisted such a move. The different beliefs about teaching and learning held by each group tended to make them devalue the approaches of the other group. Those teachers who were moved were either then senior staff who tended to be members of the BTEC Higher team or later progressed to higher salary bandings due to the 'Advanced level' work they were engaged on for professional bodies. The lower grading of the National level course meant both that there was no loss of status for those teachers who were moved out of the course team and that the HOD could change staffing without fear that the greater involvement of the smaller team in the course would lead to progression to higher scales.

The power to resist change which was enjoyed by the BTEC Higher team was based on resources which were almost a mirror image of those used by the BTEC National Team to bring about change. The fact that there were few important resource consequences arising out of the changes in the staffing of the National level team; that those changes were supported by the HOD who could implement such changes without inviting any examination of his decisions from outside of the Department; all these

factors meant that the changes were able to take place. Changes to the Higher level team could be resisted because staff changes would bring with it changes to the salary bill for the department and a need for more part-time teaching hours both of which would bring scrutiny from elsewhere in the college. As long as the course continued to recruit adequate numbers of students and to meet the minimum requirements of BTEC so that approval to offer the course would be given when the college submitted an application every five years then change could be resisted. The consequences were that the Higher level team was composed mainly of senior staff with heterogeneous views about the purposes of the course, whereas the BTEC National team contracted in size and was composed of mainly basic grade teachers who shared an ideology about the purpose of the courses.

An important element of the variation between the courses both within and between colleges is the extent to which the teachers involved accept the idea of working as part of a course team. The necessity for teachers involved with BTEC courses to work as part of a course team conflicts with the traditional autonomy of the teacher to determine what happens 'behind the classroom door' and has been the focus of much hostility to the demands of BTEC teaching in many colleges, as a Moderator attested:

"I have been accused more times than I can remember of attacking people's professionalism in pricking the so-called autonomy of the teacher. I don't think the teacher has autonomy in that sense. I think the teacher is part of the team that a student is exposed to..[they need to] discuss the total learning experience."  
(Moderator N)

BTEC's own research has indicated that course teams have not been readily accepted by staff in colleges; the fifth Annual Review of Business studies courses pointed out that developed course teams appeared less

common than BTEC might have been expected five years after the introduction of the first BEC courses.(BTEC 1984) Further evidence of the uneven development of course teams was given in the report of a special project to research issues connected with staff development in BTEC courses commissioned by BTEC in 1986. The researchers examined 12 courses in a number of colleges and found that 4 courses had no formal team meetings, 5 had team meetings which were mainly concerned with administrative issues and 3 held task centred meetings. (quoted in Tansley 1989)

### AUTONOMY

It was noted in the previous chapter that staff in both colleges mentioned the freedom which BTEC courses conferred on them; however, the nature of that freedom was interpreted differently in each college.

Teacher autonomy was not an important issue at either Wyvern College, or within the BTEC Higher team at Nash College, because the organisation of courses did not impose major restraints on that autonomy: teachers were free to pursue their teaching without any real restrictions being imposed on them by the nature of the course they taught on.

At Wyvern College there did not seem to be much movement towards a common pedagogy and it was accepted that teachers would and did approach teaching and learning differently, the notion of freedom here was an individual one.

"... in our team we don't decide as a group how we were going to teach it or when. Usually we keep roughly in line and we have common assignments but how you teach and when you teach it and when you give assignments is left up to you..." (Lecturer Y, Wyvern College)

Within the BTEC National team at Nash College the freedom was seen as freedom for the course team to decide on what the content of the course should be, once this decision had been taken there was a clear expectation that members of the team would observe 'collective responsibility'. This involved accepting a course diary which set out the ordering of course topics, and observing a common approach to teaching and learning methods. The preparation of a set of learning materials which would be used by all teachers for the core units of the course was based on the understanding that students should take an active part in classes through role-plays, simulations and research exercises and not be passive recipients of lectures or more traditional style classes. Teachers who did not or could not observe this common approach were, in the short term approached by the course co-ordinators who reminded them of the required approach and in the longer term were either not timetabled to teach BTEC National courses or chose not to teach on the courses.

### Building a Team Philosophy

The National level course co-ordinator at Nash College had organised an In-Service course for BTEC National teachers, called 'Building A Team Philosophy'. The purpose of this course was to spread an understanding of, and to try to build a commitment to, the style of teaching and learning employed on the core of the course. The core of the course had been designed and was originally taught by a small group of staff. The inclusion of teachers who had not originally participated in the design of the course and the different practices of the small number of teachers who taught option units who did not also teach on the core was seen to be producing problems arising out of differences in style and interpretation. One issue that was specifically addressed in this course was that of teacher autonomy and the right of the course team to demand a common approach

from course team members. The course report shows the discussion of this issue to have been heated but an agreed statement indicates the acceptance of the course team's right to dictate such matters as teaching styles to an individual if the style chosen by the individual conflicted with and disrupted the aims of the course as a whole.

The question of why the teachers working on the BTEC National course at Nash College were prepared to accept such limits on their autonomy is an important one.

Bernstein proposes that:

"It may be that integrated codes only work where there is a high level of ideological consensus among staff... at bottom [the integrated code] may rest upon closed explicit ideologies. Where such ideologies are not shared the consequence will become visible and threaten the whole at every point" (Bernstein 1980 p107)

The teachers on the core of the BTEC National course at Nash College felt that they shared such a common ideology (which they were more likely to describe as a philosophy); they claimed this in the interviews which were conducted:

"..I think that I'm particularly lucky because I work with a group of people whose opinions are fairly similar to mine." (Lecturer K, Nash College)

The in-service course which the course co-ordinator organised is clearly an attempt to develop and reinforce an ideology among the teachers on the course, it can also be seen as the process of re-socialising teachers into the practices of an integrated curriculum (Bernstein 1980). It was the existence of this ideology and the sense of collective responsibility for it which explains the acceptance of the constraints on their autonomy by

teachers at this college.

Two members of staff from Nash College attended a conference where representatives from all colleges in the LEA area met to discuss experiences on BTEC National courses since the issuing of new specifications in 1986. The two staff who attended reported that the scheme adopted at Nash College was significantly different from those at other colleges in a number of important areas: the differences in course structure and assessment strategies being particularly marked. In their report back on the conference the two delegates gave an account of how they had explained the philosophy of the course at Nash College. Significantly for the argument here, they reported that they had become conscious during their explanation to the other delegates that they had sounded like 'clones' of the course co-ordinator.

### Autonomy and Deskillling

There is a growing body of literature concerning the deskillling of teachers, a process which Lawn and Ozga (1988) argue entails the loss of their traditional knowledge and a number of contingent aspects, including loss of autonomy and increased supervision. This literature draws upon the debates about the labour process, reviewed in chapter 3. Many commentators argue that the contemporary deskillling of teachers has been accelerated by the imposition of curriculum changes by bodies outside of the teaching profession, particularly those associated with vocational programmes such as TVEI, YTS etc. (Shilling 1987, Sikes and Taylor 1987). Such an analysis supports the one offered in chapter 3 of this thesis, where it was argued that specific elements of BTEC course design requirements are intended to increase the power of employers at the expense of teachers.

Harland sums up the arguments, in relation to the FEU model of vocationalism, as representing:

".. a scenario in which the arrow moves inevitably from the predetermined curriculum towards teacher development and never from the teachers conception to the developing curriculum." (Harland 1987)

This analysis of the loss of control over their work by teachers in vocational courses is one which is shared by Riseborough in his study of a BTEC Hotel and Catering course:

"Although the teacher may have done some 'conceptualisation' work on the agreed syllabus, once translated and written, teachers were into a one way 'transmission' and 'execution' mode. The result was that there was a technology of control over teachers and taught." (Riseborough 1992)

It might be argued that the restriction on the autonomy of the teachers in the team at Nash College is an example of the deskilling of teachers arising out of the increased central control exercised over them by BTEC, through the specification of courses and the guidance given on course implementation. The loss of discretion over the content and pacing of courses and the need for teachers to work with materials which have been designed by others, all of which arise out of the design of the course at the college, can be seen as examples of Braverman's (1974) analysis of the organisation of work according to Taylorist principles - the separation of conception from execution - which he argues is the essence of deskilling.

There were very real constraints within which the teachers had to operate. The courses specifications were issued by BTEC, and the course did have an interface with employers through which it was nominally accountable to local commerce. However, the restrictions which this produced were, in practice, no greater than having to work within the constraints of an



externally examined syllabus. The teachers indicated that they felt less rather than more constrained in their work on BTEC courses:

"[With BTEC courses] you can broaden out what you are discussing rather than sticking to what's on the syllabus. (Lecturer B, Nash College)

"[O]n the other [non-BTEC] courses I'm teaching on, I'm you know, I'm confined in what I can and cannot do by the fact that at the end of the year they're taking an exam.." (Lecturer I, Nash College)

The restrictions on individual autonomy which existed at Nash college, were not imposed on them from outside. Rather, they represented the practical aspects of a 'philosophy', an interpretation of their roles as teachers, developed and articulated from within the team and which they sought to defend from criticism.

The restriction on the autonomy of the individual should not be confused with restrictions on the autonomy of the team as a whole. While individual team members accepted some restrictions on their (personal) autonomy, for example in using material written by others, the material was written by other members of the team and not derived from an external source, such as a curriculum package. All members of the team contributed both to the development of the course philosophy, to the overall design of the course and to course materials. As a team therefore they retained control over their own labour process, whereas individuals may have lost some control.

"It is not the programme itself which deskills but the acts of teachers who implement the programme recognising their loss of physical and ideological control over the work process." (Lawn and Ozga 1988)

The teachers themselves seemed clear about the potential their scheme offered for separating conception from execution and were critical of

managers who introduced part-time teachers to the nature of the course by explaining that 'The course is already prepared and the materials are all in the cupboard'. This view of the course presented the teacher as deskilled: it reduced the teacher's role to that of an administrator who follows rules and procedures, rather than viewing the teacher as central to the course. It posed a threat to the dominant self-image of the teachers, described previously as 'teacher as educator'. They described their own role as follows:

"We believe that to be student centred does not mean that the teacher has no role: it is the teacher who decides, based upon her/his knowledge of both the subject matter and of educational processes, how best the student can learn. The teacher's role is one of setting up situations in which students can learn and in ensuring that the "lessons" of the activities have been clear to the student." (BTEC Staff Guide, Nash College)

These teachers had accepted the value of a course where their subject expertise was less important than their ability to "[set] up situations in which students can learn." (ibid.) The characterisation of the course as 'already prepared and in the cupboard' devalued their role as teachers as well as their role as subject specialists. Such a characterisation was a threat to their professional identities: if the course existed independently of them, then little remained of their self image.

The in-service course 'Building a Team Philosophy' represented the first formal attempt to defend the orthodoxy on which the BTEC National course at the college was based, and to defend and promote the self image of the original designers of the course. It was followed by other attempts to develop consistent views about the course using devices such as the Staff Guide. The most recent phase in their efforts to defend their self-image and to resist the type of managerial strategy referred to, was the

formation of a BTEC core team which was to take responsibility for the design, implementation and teaching of the core units at all three levels of BTEC courses. This meant the virtual exclusion of part-time teachers from the core units. The acceptance of the creation of such a team by the management of the business studies department is a reflection of the importance of BTEC courses to the work of the department (they accounted for around 40% of student hours) and the need of the management to maintain the growth of BTEC courses, which could only be achieved through the efforts of the teaching staff. The (theoretical) loss of managerial discretion - in the first year of its operation staff were still timetabled to teach on these courses from outside of the core team despite the assurances given - had to be balanced against the loss of goodwill from the staff.

The ability of these teachers to maintain their autonomy in the future is threatened by the alignment of BTEC courses with the demands of General National Vocational Qualifications. The performance criteria for assessing students achievements are now centrally determined by BTEC and NCVQ; it is intended that eventually the methods through which students attainments are assessed will also be determined by NCVQ. If this occurs then every student in every BTEC National course in every college across the country will have to have produced (for example) an organisational chart for two local firms; whereas, to take an example from Nash College, currently students might be asked to develop an organisational structure for a co-operative and to discuss the relationship between the structure and aims of the co-op. Unless teachers are able to develop new strategies for resisting a reduction in their autonomy they will have no discretion in determining the best way of achieving a desired outcome, what evidence will be acceptable to demonstrate that students

have achieved that outcome, and what standard is necessary to determine a pass.

### Conclusions

It has been argued that BTEC courses do not produce similar responses within all colleges and that there are a variety of practices which can be accommodated within such courses. The precise nature of the course which develops depending on the distribution of power both within the college department, and between the college, the students and their employers.

One major resource which the BTEC National team at Nash college possessed and were able to use to defend their practices was a clearly thought out ideology which drew on a particular interpretation of BTEC's requirements and aspects of 'progressive' educational practices. The consistency of view which they were able to present to defend their practices meant that they were able to exercise a degree of autonomy, directing events rather than responding to an externally generated agenda. That such a shared ideology existed was a product of the efforts of the course co-ordinator who had acted as an effective change agent to develop a common philosophy amongst the members of the course team through devices such as the 'Building a Team Philosophy' course and the day to day management of the course.

The pattern of BTEC courses within colleges can only be understood as a negotiated outcome reflecting the distribution of power between the various actors. The next chapter addresses the power exercised by students in the context of their college course.

## Notes

1. Taken from a moderators report.
2. The specification has since been redefined in April 1992.
3. Prior to 1990 courses were graded accorded to the qualifications necessary for entry. Guidelines laid out in the "Burnham Report" set out a system for calculating staffing and grading of FE Establishments based upon the 'Points' total generated by the numbers of students following courses. The higher the Grading of courses the more points which are generated by students. BTEC Higher courses were graded as Burnham Category 3, National level Courses as Category 4.
4. Staff who taught at least 50% of their timetable on courses graded as Category 3 or above were entitled to progress to the Senior Lecturer salary scale and to have their teaching hours reduced to that of a Senior Lecturer by virtue of the demands of teaching Higher level work. This system was widely regarded as divisive and had been the focus of discontent among members of NATFHE, the lecturers union for many years.

## CHAPTER 9

### STUDENTS OR WORKERS?

#### INTRODUCTION

Thus far the chapters in the second part of this thesis have focused on the intentions of the designers of BTEC courses and the reactions of teachers to these demands. The focus of the analysis in this chapter is the response of young people to the courses which they experience. The intention is to examine the extent to which young peoples' attitudes are influenced by their college courses. The first part of this thesis analysed BTEC courses in terms of the intention to prepare young people for entry to deskilled jobs in the future. The preceding chapters have examined teachers' reactions to the demands of the courses. What remains is to examine the extent to which participation in a particular college course influences the attitudes of young people to work. The analysis in this chapter is set against the background of reproduction theory. Much of traditional reproduction theory was formulated at high levels of abstraction and told us little of the specific practices adopted by teachers and students in schools and colleges, or the derivation of those practices from the economic, social and cultural context in which schools and colleges are located. This chapter seeks to offer evidence of the nature and derivation of these practices.

This chapter offers an analysis of interviews conducted with students following BTEC National courses at Nash college. Chapter 6 argued that the course at Nash College was justified by the teachers who planned and taught it in terms of its educational merit rather responding to the 'needs'

of industry. The interviews with students at Nash College sought to establish how far the students' attitudes were influenced by their experiences. This chapter will argue that, just as there were differences between the intentions underlying BTEC's design of the course and the rationale which was offered for the course by the teachers at Nash college, the course which students saw themselves as following was quite different from the one which teachers saw themselves as teaching.

A major purpose of the chapter is to illustrate the ways in which the students interviewed were active agents rather than passive and compliant recipients of the messages of the college. Drawing on interview material, field notes and documentary sources the chapter will show the ways in which students interpreted the course in the light of their existing ideas about the distribution of effort and rewards and actively rejected ideas which they found incompatible with such ideas. The chapter offers evidence of the indeterminate role of FE colleges in preparing young people for their place in the work force except as a credentialising agency.

The chapter begins with a statement of the teachers' views of the purpose of the courses which provides a continuing backdrop for examining the conflict between the values of the teachers and the expectations of the students. The motivation of students for enrolling on the BTEC National course are then examined with a view to identifying the values of the students and comparing them with those of the teachers. The middle section of the chapter sets out an analysis of the responses of students to two elements of their course - 'the pedagogy' and the perceived 'relevance' of the course contents. It will be argued that while teachers justify the course in terms of the development of students as individuals, students evaluate the course in terms of its perceived relevance to the

world of work. However, the notion of relevance which students employ often bears little relation to the day to day practice of clerical work, rather the concept was used to endorse elements of the course which reflected their existing understanding organisation of work.

It is argued that the criticism made by students concerning the relevance of course activities was more effective in bringing about changes to the course than was the requirement that the teachers should consult with employers and involve them in the implementation of the course. The changes which were introduced as a result of these criticisms and the processes through which change was brought about are examined at the end of this chapter. The discussion in this section provides both further illustration of the constraints within which the teachers in Nash College operated and evidence of the role of young people themselves in reproducing the attitudes necessary for the continuing operation of the labour market.

### TEACHERS VALUES

For the BTEC National teachers at Nash College, the courses were seen as a way of equipping students to make sense of their current experiences rather than being a preparation for a future role; the emphasis was on understanding the present rather than preparing for the future. The teachers described the purpose of the course in the following way:

#### "Purpose of the courses

We see these courses as practical introductions to the world of organisations where, for the majority of students, their future working lives will lie. The courses are therefore Practical and not Academic - knowledge is seen as important for the solution of particular problems and for *helping the student to understand her/his situation*, rather than being valued for it's own sake - and also Organisational and not



Entrepreneurial - the courses are intended to help students develop skills and knowledge which will make them more effective members of a team, rather than equip them to set up their own business." (Staff Guide, underlining in original, italics added.)

The teachers' views of the purposes of the course were expressed to students through a handbook given to the students at the beginning of their course; it will be argued that a major difference between the teachers' and the students perception of the purposes of the courses was the balance of emphasis between 'being' and 'becoming'. The teachers regarded the course as useful for understanding 'where they were now'. Students, as will be demonstrated below, saw the courses as useful only in as far as they functioned as 'stepping stones' to something else. This 'something else' was generally conceived of as a professional or managerial job. These fundamental differences towards the purposes of the course are never articulated in these terms but are hidden beneath the discussion of the course in terms of 'skills'. It was argued in chapter 5 that discussion of skills in vocational education operates as a 'slogan system' where meanings are never clarified and a number of interpretations are possible. The differences between the interpretation of teachers and students at Nash college will be illustrated in the discussion of the conflict over the course contents later in this chapter. First the chapter examines the motivation of students at Nash college for joining a BTEC National course.

The discussion here takes a different focus from that adopted in the preceding chapters. To the extent that previous chapters have analysed the purposes implicit in the design of BTEC courses and the reaction of teachers to them, they have understated the role of the students themselves in ensuring or otherwise that such purposes are achieved. Thus far the thesis has not explored the extent to which the practice of FE is the result

of a political process involving not only the institutional players - Teachers, college management and institutions such as BTEC - but also the students who have interests which they are intent on promoting. The next section restores the balance and sets out to relate the day-to-day practice of one BTEC course to the interaction between students and teachers. In doing so the thesis returns to the discussion in chapter 6 concerning the debate about the role of individual action, as against structural determinism in the process of the reproduction of the social relations of production.

### **BTEC STUDENTS**

This section examines the reasons why students enrolled on BTEC Courses at Nash college. The section is important in so far as it seeks to illustrate that the homogeneity of the views expressed by them cannot be explained in terms of the homogeneity of the student population.

The students who were interviewed were drawn from both full-time and part-time students in each year of the course. Students following these courses were self-selected in the sense that admission to full- and part-time BTEC National Courses in Business Studies at the college was based only on the student's possession of the entry qualifications specified by BTEC<sup>(1)</sup>: there was no selection by the college from within those who possessed the entry qualifications.

Young people who applied for full-time courses were invited to a presentation by the course co-ordinator which set out the nature of the course at the college. Presentations were made to groups of about 15 students, who were told that they could all enrol for the course provided that they achieved the entry qualifications and were still interested after

hearing the nature of the course. The co-ordinator indicated that the intention was that students should select the college and the course, rather than vice-versa.

Part-time students attended the college in the week before the course started and signed up for the course without any formal selection process.

The selection procedure therefore did not, of itself, produce homogeneity among those who enrolled for BTEC courses at this college. Included among those who were interviewed were 12 students who had left school with few formal qualifications but whose entry qualifications were either a BTEC First Award (usually gained as part of a Youth Training scheme), or simply their age, while others had an impressive array of GCSE's. The composition of part-time courses reflected the view that FE serves as a second chance or alternative route to qualifications for those who failed in (or were failed by) the school system:

".. I went into [ ] which was a big factory producing paper bags, and I eventually got promoted to be a machine operator. And then, someone said to me: 'That's as high as you're going to get.' and I thought ... [at] 18 years of age, that I'd actually reached where I was going to be for the rest of my life, and that hit me. 'Cos you know I've always been credited with being intelligent and I thought 'this isn't for me'. " (André, Full time year 2 - now taking an Industrial Relations degree at University)

"I was quite nervous about coming back 'cos of me age. I knew I'd be one of the eldest in the class and sometimes that's a problem, but it hasn't proved to be one. I'm thoroughly enjoying it [the course]... I didn't like school very much. I wasn't very popular. I didn't get on with the, sort of, normal day to day thing ... I just learned how to smoke, fight and swear, that's my memories of it". (Teresa, part-time year 1)

The students who were interviewed were therefore drawn from a variety

of educational backgrounds and were of markedly different ages. There were identifiable differences between the reasons why full-time and part-time students enrolled on the courses but despite these differences it is possible to characterise the motivation of most members of each group as being 'Instrumental': neither group valued the course as an end in itself. The next section examines the motivation held by students for joining the courses.

### CHOOSING A COURSE

Students attend BTEC National Courses for a variety of reasons. BTEC's research (BTEC May 1985) found that full-time students entered the course with the idea that the course would improve their job prospects. For the majority of full-time students interviewed at Nash College, the main attraction of the course was that it allowed them to keep their options open; most of them chose business studies because they didn't know what they wanted to do:

"Well, I didn't even know what I wanted to do and so they said a business studies course would be better for me because the things it offers and then you can go on - ..it sort of helps you with a breaking point really, choosing what to do."  
(Rachel, Full-time Year 2)

"When I left school I was unsure what I wanted to do... I thought 'I don't want to make the mistake of getting into a job and being stuck there, so I found out about this course.'  
(Maryanne, Full-time Year 1)

Full-time students had no particular career in mind when they chose the course. Most were not expressing a commitment to a particular occupational route by enrolling on the course, rather they saw the course as a kind of insurance policy. The 'pay off' for their 'investment' would be, if all else failed, entry to a managerial position of some kind.

Part-time students tended to be similarly instrumental about their entry to the course - seeing it as a means to an end. The majority had 'chosen' it only in the limited sense that they needed the BTEC award for entry to some other course leading to a professional qualification (cf. the discussion of young people in the labour market in chapter 6) . Most of those in this category mentioned accounting qualifications - or that their employers used the BTEC National as a criteria for selecting candidates for promotion. The bulk of the remainder had not 'chosen' the course even in this limited sense: attendance was a condition of their acceptance on a training scheme, typically a Youth Training Scheme. The smallest category (3 interviewees) were currently unemployed or doing temporary work and saw the possession of a qualification as the key to gaining a job:

"I didn't really leave school with any qualifications, as such just CSE's, they're nothing these days I suppose .. so I thought: I've got to get meself summat if I want to get a decent job." (Andy, Part-time Year 1)

Andy's comments sum up the view of the course which was held by most of the young people who were interviewed. None of the students chose the course as a result of an intrinsic interest in business studies. Rather their attitudes reflected their understanding of the significance of credentials as distinguishing between individuals selling their labour power in the labour market. There was no evidence that the students saw the purpose of their course in anything other than traditional terms of the exchange of qualifications for jobs. None of the students interviewed indicated any commitment to the type of flexible clerical labour which it has been argued that the courses were intended by their designers to develop. Rather, the students were expressing a commitment to the kind of meritocratic ideology which equated the possession of qualifications as the key to 'getting on'. Young people brought their (ideological)

knowledge of the labour market to their college course rather than deriving their knowledge of work organisation from that course.

Willis' (1977) study of "How working class kids get working class Jobs" is perhaps the best known Marxist attempt to relate the practices of students in schools to the knowledge of work which they brought from their cultural backgrounds. Willis was concerned to explain why it was that young working class males chose to enter unskilled work which they knew would not be intrinsically satisfying or offer 'careers' of the type which were publicly valued by the school and wider society. The 'Lads' Willis studied actively rejected the culture which the school promoted. Drawing on the knowledge of work derived from their families and communities, they celebrated manual labour as 'masculine', and devalued as 'feminine' the mental effort valued by the school. Willis argues that this rejection is an act of "penetration" of bourgeois ideology: the 'Lads' who reject the school culture do so because they have made a realistic assessment of their future position in the labour market in spite of the illusory (given the constraints of the labour market in their town) promise of upward mobility offered by schooling. The strategies employed by the 'Lads' in resisting the authority of the school are argued to have their origins and their parallels in male shop-floor culture.

The students who were interviewed in the course of this study were drawn from different backgrounds to those in Willis' study. Notably they included many young women, the majority of students following BTEC courses are women (BTEC 1989) as are the majority of clerical workers (Crompton & Sanderson 1990), and the communities from which they were drawn were based on employment in the service industries. Nonetheless they were prepared to actively reject the messages of their

course which they did not accept as reflecting their knowledge of the world of work. However, these were students who desperately wanted to believe that their course was the key to upward mobility.

The focus of Willis' study is the non-conformist 'Lads'. He regards the 'earoles' who conform to the requirements of the school as duped by bourgeois ideology. Critics argue that Willis ignores the possibility that those who do conform may be pursuing a conscious strategy, reflecting an instrumental rather than a normative adaptation to the values of the school (Hammersley & Turner 1980). Because the focus of Willis' study is on those who reject the values of the school, we know little of the reasons why those who conform to the demands placed on them do so. While the 'Lads' are seen as active participants in deciding their own destinies in the labour market, the 'earoles' are reduced to passive recipients of schooling (Riseborough 1992). The treatment of conformism is therefore deterministic and over-socialised (Brown 1987). The students interviewed for this study *wanted* to conform to the demands of their course and to the demands of work. They saw the course as the key to better jobs in the future, when the form or content of the course challenged this assumption they withdrew their conformity and used whatever resources were available to them (described below) to register their disapproval.

When pressed about why they chose the BTEC National rather than other courses which might equally serve the same credentialist purpose, two features of the courses seemed to be significant in tipping the balance in favour of BTEC: the system of continuous assessment and the practical nature of the course.

"I didn't want to do something like 'A' levels  
whereas it mostly depends on exams at the end  
of it, 'cos I felt, you know, after doing two

years and your work being fairly good and to get your exam results at the end and like muck them up or whatever; I felt that the BTEC like we do, you know, the harder you work the better your grade at the end of it; and that suits me more." (Vicky, Full-time year 2)

"For what I wanted to do its definitely the right thing because it gives you, like you know, practical experience of management." (Ray, Full-time year 1)

This last comment from Ray illustrates a difference between the students' perception of the course and that of the teachers who designed it - although it is perhaps the dominant view of business studies courses. For the teachers the course was valued as offering students an understanding of the forces which controlled their lives at present and in giving them the skills to make those forces work for them as far as was possible; for full-time students, on the other hand, the value of the course was its perceived pay off in the future in terms of becoming workers (particularly managerial workers). The motivation of the students was, therefore, future orientated - their reasons for enrolling on the course reflected their desire to attain certain positions in the future rather than remaining in their present ones.

The differences in orientation to, and expectations of, the course provided a source of conflict between teachers and the students; aspects of these differences, and the conflicts which they generated will be explored in the following sections which examine the students responses to certain elements of the courses they were following.

### Student Responses

Given the instrumental orientation towards entry to the courses which the interviews revealed among all students, it might be expected that they would exhibit similarly instrumental attitudes to their experiences on the



course. (cf. Riseborough 1992)

However, the students interviewed were in the main enthusiastic about their experiences. Part of this enthusiasm was attributable to the perceived differences in the 'atmosphere' between school and college: for many of the interviewees this was their first experience of post-school education and they commented on the freedom which college life granted them. But students who had experienced other courses within colleges remarked on the differences in approach adopted on the BTEC National:

"I didn't know anything about it when I joined ... I'm enjoying it. I'm quite surprised at the way in which its run with so much of a, um, a practical approach. I've never come across a course like it before ... I'm enjoying it. I look forward to it each week." (Carol part-time year 1 - previously attended Accounting and other courses sponsored by Employment Training)

The vast majority of both full- and part-time students interviewed summed up their response to the course with comments such as "It's not like school" (cf. Hustler 1989). Much of the meaning which such was intended to be conveyed by such a characterisation was the greater freedom typically associated with all college courses. The following section sets out an analysis of students responses to their course, focusing on the two elements - the pedagogy and the idea that the courses were 'relevant' - which the students saw as most unlike school.

### PEDAGOGY

The 'official' pedagogy of the course is described in the Staff Guide given to staff who teach on BTEC Business Studies courses within the college, which was referred to earlier in this chapter. The Staff Guide was drafted by a member of the course team and approved by the remainder, after amendment by them - the pedagogy described should not therefore be seen

as being imposed from outside. The relevant section is:

"Teaching and Learning

BTEC courses in this college are both 'Student Centred' and 'Skills Based'. In practice this means that our assumption is that in every class the emphasis will be on what Students do and not on what the teacher does: the basis of our practice is that students take an active role in their own learning." (Staff Guide, Nash College)

An important feature of the style of teaching and learning adopted was the emphasis placed upon group work and on the assessment of group assignments. College Staff were committed to the inclusion of group work for a variety of reasons, ranging from the pragmatic 'two heads are better than one' to the emphasis on co-operation in the course as a political value.

Students welcomed the opportunity the course presented for them to take an active role in classes - there was a positive reaction to the pedagogy based on the perception that "It makes you think for yourself" which was a spontaneous response by a large number of those interviewed - but the emphasis which the teachers placed on group work caused some students much concern. There was additional frustration expressed when students were given assessed tasks to complete which involved them working in groups and for which each group member received the same grade:

"I don't enjoy the group, um, some of the group activities 'cos some contribute more than others and some just go along with it and, uh - If like the case of today, we're doing an assignment and it seems that there are certain members of the group who are just going along with it ... and the other ones are doing all the work." (Cheryl, part-time year 1)

That there was concern over group work reflects the individualistic and instrumental nature of the attitudes held by many of the students who

wished to be assessed on their own achievements unencumbered by others in the group, so that they could progress either to a further qualification or to a better job. The problems associated with group work also violated their understanding of the principles on which achievement is recognised and rewarded. Vicky, who was quoted earlier in this chapter, neatly summarised those principles when she explained the attraction of continuous assessment as:

"..the harder you work the better your grade at the end of it.." (Vicky, Full-time year 2)

Group work and particularly group assignments were regarded as 'unfair' as students saw the possibility that *everyone* would receive the same grade. This grade would not reflect the efforts of individuals - those who hadn't participated would 'drag down' the grade of those who had worked, while those who had participated would be penalised for the lack of effort of the others.

The concern with group work was also raised at the consultative meetings held with employers representatives. The easiest and most effective way for staff to avoid having to debate the issue and to answer such concerns was that 'the ability to work with others' was one of the BTEC Common Skills and they had no choice but to include it in the course: however, it has been noted previously that staff regarded this as an important element of the course. Working in groups remained a contentious element of the course and an issue which staff had to deal with in each year, but the staff were able to use their greater knowledge of BTEC 'requirements' - again, it is important to note that what the staff were defending was their interpretation of what BTEC's requirements were and yet presented their interpretation as the only possible one - as a resource to resist changes to what they regarded as an important element of the course. The section

entitled 'Conflict and Change' later in this chapter will illustrate that where such resources were absent, the course changed dramatically in response to student criticisms.

The second element of the course which the students saw as being different from school was the 'relevance' of the course contents.

### COURSE CONTENT AND RELEVANCE

The interviews illustrated the instrumental attitudes of the students who were interviewed and the perceived irrelevance of school to their lives:

"[at college] ..you learn things like unions, you pick up things that you've never known, because they never taught you that at school, you know, all the sort of - all the relevant stuff that you need to know to get along in a working environment." (Greg, Part-time year 2)

That students should evaluate school experience as less relevant than what is, after all, a vocational course, might seem unexceptionable. However, the assertion of relevance demands the question 'Relevant to what?'. An analysis of the interview material reveals that there were different meanings attached to the concept; it is possible to identify different uses of the term by three different groups of students:

- \* The full-time students.
- \* Those part-time students who saw the course content as irrelevant to their present jobs but relevant in the future.
- \* Those who saw the content as irrelevant but the 'skills' element as relevant.

The views of each group will be examined in turn.

1. The full-time students. When asked about any feature of their experience on their course these students were more likely to explain it in

terms that it was 'like being at work' than those students who were at work. Responses to questions concerning any element of their course were typically answered in terms which were related to work: thus, one student answered a question about continuous assessment in the following terms:

"Its, uh, on a par with how it might be when you go out to work. 'Cos when you go out to work, the work you do - if you've got a job to do within a month you've got to work on that job for that month. And then, say if you've got to win a contract, if you win the contract that's like your grade. But at work, you're not working all the time and then just doing one thing at the end of say five years..if you like, you're being continuously assessed at work."  
(Jason Full-time year 1)

The opening section of this chapter illustrated that full-time students had chosen the course for largely negative reasons - either because they didn't want to do 'A' levels, or because they didn't know what it was they really wanted to do and saw the course as a way of keeping their options open. Nonetheless, having committed time and effort to the course, they saw the need to justify their commitment to college in terms of vocational preparation and consequently they were prepared to see relevance in any and every activity in the course. But, in doing so, these students often suspended their knowledge, derived from their work experience<sup>[2]</sup>, of what work demanded of them and tried to see relevance where none existed. For example, when questioned about the relevance of course contents to their work experience they would make connections between the Accounting elements of the course, which essentially concerned the interpretation of end of year accounting statements, and the recording of transactions concerning petty cash - activities which are as closely related as knowing how to fill a car with petrol is to the theory of the internal combustion engine.

The essence of this aspect of full-time students' ideas about relevance is summed up in the student's response in this interchange:

Sarah: "...I'm not a great person for standing up in front of big groups of people and giving talks and that. I mean, OK, I know I've got to do this for the course and that's fair enough, but I'm not a great lover of it ... I don't feel comfortable always in standing up, I mean I know I've got to overcome that and I'm getting there.."

Interviewer: "Why do you think they make the course the way that it is?"

Student: "Because its business related 'cos its going to help you and that's the sort of thing you've got to do in a job, presentations and that sort of stuff."

Interviewer: "Is it? Is that what your work experience told you about jobs?"

Student: "No it told me the opposite, actually... there wasn't any, sort of like, presentations or anything.. but no it wasn't anything like meetings or presentations or anything. But that might've just been the department I was in. So that might not be anything to go by." (Sarah year 1)

Having made an 'investment' in the course Sarah was not prepared to concede that the course was not 'relevant' to work, rather she saw the problem as lying with her work experience which was perceived as probably atypical. Like most of her colleagues on the full-time course Sarah needed to see her course as relevant and re-interpreted her work experience in the light of the demands of her course.

Chapter 7 showed that the teachers who taught on the course justified it in terms of values other than its vocational relevance. The full-time students were clearly not passive recipients of the values of their teachers, for these students the perceived relevance of the course was a very important feature of their self-image as business studies students; they needed to

believe that their 'investment' could be justified in terms of the preparation for work and the pay-off in terms of a better job than they would otherwise be qualified for. These students were rejecting their teachers values not because of what they already knew about the 'realities' of work as did the 'lads' in Willis' study, but because they subscribed to a different ideology about work. This ideology reflected the assumptions of human capital theory which, as was argued in chapter 3, underlies much of the public debate about education and training.

Full-time students' experiences of work did not fit in with the demands of their course and rather than accept that their course might not be relevant to work they assumed that the course must be relevant to the type of work which they were being prepared for, work of which they had no experience at present. These students were attempting to construct a view of *work as relevant to their course* in college; an inversion of the accepted notion of relevance. For many of them this was achieved through the concept of a career: the course might not be relevant to past or current experiences but it was the first rung on the career ladder into management where their present experiences on the course were anticipated or expected to be useful:

" [With] a business course .. you're not just saying I just want to be a secretary and I just want to work for so-and-so. You want to be the person who has the secretary. You know, you have bigger ambitions." (Alexandra year 2)

Once again there is a conflict between the orientation of the teachers who saw the course as useful in itself and the values of the students who viewed the course instrumentally as a passport to a managerial career: this career orientation was one which was shared by the majority of part-time students.

2. Part-time students who saw the course content as irrelevant to their present jobs but relevant in the future. The orientation of this group of part-time students was similar to that of the full-time students in that they also viewed the relevance of the course to some future job but not to their present positions. They had internalised the aspirations to a career, which Goldthorpe (1980) argues, is one of the reasons why (male) clerical workers have not been proletarianised, despite the repetitive nature of much clerical work. However, their self image was one of 'worker' and not 'student' and they were not committed to the view of their course as immediately relevant in the same sense as full-time students.

The majority of part-time students were enrolled on the course for purely instrumental reasons; it was a means to an end, to further qualifications or to promotion. This was reflected in their attitude to many areas of the course, compare the following view of continuous assessment, which is typical of that held by part-time students, with the view of the full-time student quoted in the previous section:

Student: "I wouldn't like to do an exam for a start. I wouldn't like to have to sit down and think that it all depends on this three hour exam.. that every thing could depend on this and I think [continuous assessment] is a much fairer way of doing it to gradually do it doing it over the course of the two years."

Interviewer: "Fairer to who"

Student: "To me .. If I sat down in a three hour exam and had to do it I would do it but I'd be panicking and thinking that if I blow this I've blown two years of a course." (Paul, part-time year 1)

Part-time students regarded continuous assessment as 'fairer' because it protected their 'investment' in the course, a course to which they were only committed instrumentally as a means to the qualifications or



promotion which was their ultimate goal. The unpredictability of exam performance meant that even those who had done well in traditional exams still expressed a preference for continuous assessment.

Part-time students were not committed to the course as a training programme for their present posts; rather the course was regarded as a preparation for an assumed future role. The orientation of this group of part-time students was to the future rather than to the present, the emphasis was on becoming a manager rather than remaining a clerk. These students could tolerate the irrelevance of the course materials to their immediate jobs as long as the contents were compatible with their view of what managers needed to know:

"I wanted to do some business and finance 'cos that'll take me on - I can go on and do the AAT [Association of Accounting Technicians] after. Um, I thought it was OK, um, the work is not, I don't think its that relevant to what I want to do...I don't really find it much help... I think its just there - like the business side; You learn about businesses, how they run, organisations, different types of businesses and, like the markets: how they sell and buy things that sort of side of things - so that if you move on into a management sort of job it might help you then."  
(Dean, Part-time year 2)

Its worth noting here that Dean works for the local health authority (he is in the second year of a Youth Training Programme in the finance section of the Authority) and much of the knowledge which he thinks might be helpful in a managerial position would actually be irrelevant to the job of a manager in such an organisation - except perhaps to help formulate a critique of the inappropriateness of market models in the health service.

While the content of the course accorded with the students' uncritical view of what management does, i.e. take major decisions based on criteria of

profit & loss, these students were prepared to accept a course in which the contents were irrelevant to them and their needs. The students' view is characterised as uncritical as it reflects an idealised view of 'management' rather than their experience: of the students interviewed only two worked in small organisations in the private sector where decisions about profit and loss might be taken within the local organisation. For the remainder, who either worked in the public sector or in large corporations, management roles would largely consist of implementing decisions the substance of which would be determined elsewhere. The significance of the reaction of these student to their course is that they are prepared to tolerate a curriculum which is irrelevant to their everyday working lives insofar as they recognise its contents as supportive of, or at least not incompatible with<sup>[3]</sup>, a managerial mode of thought which incorporates entrepreneurial values and which is assumed to relate to their future careers. (Pearce 1987)

The analyses in the previous chapters and the extract from the staff guide given at the beginning of this chapter indicates that the teachers of BTEC business studies were expressly committing themselves to a different set of values from those held by students who enrolled on the course. The conflicts which arose out of these differing values focused on the issue of 'relevance' and the consequences of them are considered further in the case study section later in this chapter.

The final group were those part-time students who had accepted the arguments about skills which the teachers used to defend the nature of the course. Their views are considered in the next section.

### 3. Those who saw the content as irrelevant but the 'skills' element as

relevant. This view of the course was closest to the official rationale for the course offered by the teachers, as examined in chapter 6. It was also the view held by the smallest number of respondents.

Lucy and Jo, part-time second year students, sum up this view of the course:

Lucy: "It seemed such a waste of time spending two years doing 'A' levels that wouldn't have been relevant to what you were doing anyway."

Interviewer: does that mean that your course at the 'tech. is relevant to what you do at work?

Lucy "I mean, history would have been no use to us at all, and here its much more the skills as well isn't it? ... Quite a lot of the time its not so much what you do, its the reasoning behind what you're doing."

Jo "I mean the - its developing skills that you'll use. I mean, I can't see that all the subjects we've covered, I'd actually use all that...there's been a lot about working in groups. I mean, in our office - well everywhere - you are divided into sections and quite often sub-sections so you are always working with people and so therefore I think .. its sort of got to be adapted you know, because its different situations and everything but the same sort of theories can apply."

The attitude expressed towards the course by these students can be interpreted as being that which the underlying design features of BTEC courses are intended to foster. The intention was, as explained in chapter 5, to facilitate the development of a clerical labour market by equipping clerical workers with attitudes and transferable skills which are demanded by the application of new technology to office work. There was no evidence that this was the intention of the teachers at Nash College in designing their course, indeed the evidence from the interview material reproduced in the preceding chapters suggests that they were more

concerned with the personal development of students. The nature of the course produced in this college and the responses to it by students points up some of the constraints and tensions for teachers who see the purposes of their work as being other than responding to the demands of employers.

These teachers had selectively adopted and adapted the emphasis on student activity in BTEC Business Studies courses to produce a course which they believed to be educationally sound. They countered criticisms of the relevance of the content of the course by emphasising that they were concerned with 'skills' which were relevant. That significant numbers of students used criteria other than 'skills' to judge the relevance of the course marked a failure of the teachers to change the attitudes held by the majority of students. That a small number of students did evaluate the course in terms of its skills and their relevance to work illustrates the double bind which characterised the teachers work: in rejecting a model of the course as being training and therefore not justified on the basis of its immediate relevance to the workplace meant that they defended the course in terms which are essentially those required by BTEC. In doing so they have produced students who, in the course of their interviews, declared themselves to feel more confident about their own ability and who feel better able to tackle unfamiliar problems at work, exactly the attitudes which the analysis in chapters 4 & 5 of this thesis argued were those which are likely to be required by clerical jobs which have been redesigned using the potential of micro-electronic technology. Compare the list drawn up by Applebaum & Albin (1989) of the skills associated with such work:

1. Social & Communication skills
2. Managerial skills relating to planning, organising time more effectively, thinking more effectively about the enterprise, and acting in a

strategic manner.

### 3. General skills relating to computer technology.

with the statement by a second year part-time student about what she had got out of her course:

"It gets you to use your initiative..it also gives you more confidence at work, I think...If somebody asks you to go and see 'so and so' or 'so and so' in the marketing department you don't think 'Oh my god, I Haven't got to go over there with all those people' ... The subjects aren't necessarily [relevant], its useful. The actual - what you have to - Its the confidence aspect that's helped me at work and I feel better about doing things and taking things on now. Whereas before I'd say 'oh, I can't do that', now its a challenge and I just get on with it." (Julie, Part-time year 2)

The differences in orientation to the course which have been examined in these sections provided a source of conflict between teachers and the students; aspects of these differences, and the conflicts which they generated will be explored in the following sections.

## CONFLICT AND CHANGE

This section draws together a number of themes which have recurred in the earlier sections of this chapter. It traces changes to the BTEC National course at Nash College and offers an explanation of them in terms of the different values held by teachers and students to the course and the students' ideas of relevance.

The background to the particular events described in this section was the announcement by BTEC of a number of changes to the specification of the BTEC National course in the academic year 1985/86. The changes brought alterations to the constituent units which make up a BTEC National award and to both the pattern of student assessment and to the

system of grading which was to be used to record students achievement. All colleges were therefore involved in planning for implementation of the new course design. The BTEC National course at Nash College was revised in accordance with the new specification and the new course was offered for the first time in September 1986. The Core of the course, which had previously consisted of three modules which were developed, taught, and assessed by separate teachers, was designed as an integrated, activity based course which called upon teachers to work together in a team. The design of the core reflected the 'educational' values of the teachers who were responsible for devising it. In the handbook given to the students setting out the nature and structure of the course the first two sections of the course were described as follows

#### "1. Induction

In this section you will be introduced to the aims of the unit and the teaching and learning methods we intend to use

#### 2. Living in our Society

This section starts out by looking at some information about our Society and what that information might be used for. We then go on to think about how society is organised and structured, and consider how far things could be organised differently."

The 'content' of this second section of the course was aimed at developing students' ability to find and use statistical information and to present arguments orally. There were a variety of ways in which this was achieved including a 'game' played in class involving rolling of dice and the calculation of life chances for different social classes based on the score achieved, and an exercise in which students had to research, interpret and present statistical information concerning the existence of systematic discrimination based on evidence of wage differentials between men and women.

Subsequent sections of the course dealt with the characteristics common to all organisations and with the nature of organisations producing goods and services - more typical concerns of business studies courses.

The first assignment in the course asked students to design a booklet to be used by a group of foreign students visiting for the first time the city in which Nash College was situated . The assignment was intended to get students to appreciate the importance of addressing the needs of a specific audience when communicating, a continuing theme in the course.

The experiences of students on the initial sections of the course brought a number of criticisms from them concerning the 'Relevance' of the course content to business which fed back to the employers of part-time students and resulted in prolonged correspondence between certain employers and one of the course co-ordinators.

The original cohort of students who had voiced criticisms had completed their course before the interviews on which this chapter is based were conducted, it was therefore impossible to gather any interview evidence concerning their reactions to the course. The course co-ordinator had retained the correspondence which had been generated as a result. One such item had been sent by a Training Officer whose organisation sponsored many of its employees to attend the evening BTEC National course. The Training Officer had contacted the college after a number of students had raised doubts and criticisms with her about the nature of the course; one of the complaints recorded was that the course was "More like Sociology than Business Studies." The course in its original form was not meeting the expectations of students concerning the nature of Business Studies courses dealing as it did with issues such as class and gender roles,

unconnected, in their eyes, with notions of profit and loss which as was argued in the previous section, most students saw as 'relevant' to their future careers.

As a result of the 'hassle' which these and other criticisms caused for the course co-ordinator and the time consumed with dealing with them, the course team had changed the content of certain of the activities on the course for future years while maintaining the form. Essentially the teachers were accepting the logic of the arguments which they deployed to counter criticisms of the course that it was concerned with certain skills which were context independent ("The medium is the message" was a favourite dictum of the course coordinator); the skills which could be developed and practised through any one of a number of subjects. For example, the second section of the course was rewritten so that the statistics which students researched involved changes in numbers employed in certain industries, changes in the level and distribution of trade union membership, and similar items. The assignment described above concerning the leaflet for foreign students was rewritten to require students to produce a handout to be taken away from a conference organised for foreign business people; the handout was to give background details concerning the British economy. Similar changes were made to other course activities.

The significance of these changes is that the activities which replaced the original ones were no more directly relevant to students' day to day jobs than were the original ones. Nonetheless, they were perceived by the students as more appropriate to a business studies course and had caused no controversy at among the students interviewed in connection with this study. The students' co-operation with the demands of their course was



contingent upon the course reinforcing their assumptions about the value of the course.

The description of the second section of the course which had previously been described as evaluating the possibility of organising society differently was revised in the course handbook as follows:

### Business Skills

In this section we look at a range of skills that you will need later in the course and at work. Special attention is paid to your ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing.

Student reaction to the course had been more effective in producing change in the course content than the requirement to involve employers in a formal sense; employers only had the opportunity to comment on the course twice a year in a formal setting in which the teachers were able to justify the course using arguments about the skills which the course was aiming to develop. On the other hand students met teachers every week and the persistent nature of their negative responses seems to have been like the proverbial dripping of water onto a stone. The teachers' attempts to exploit the freedom given to them by a course which emphasised the development of skills rather than the development of knowledge had been constrained by the conservative nature of student expectations (cf. Dale 1979) which had limited their ability to develop a course which took advantage of the 'educational' opportunities which they saw as being presented by the design of the courses.

Rather than an attempt by the teachers to explicitly socialise students into the values of the business world (accepting the caveats which must be taken from chapter 7) the teachers had planned a course which

had raised questions about those values. The students themselves had not been the unwitting or unwilling recipient of the values of the college, as some of the more over-determinist versions of reproduction theory would suggest. Rather they had brought their own knowledge of the world of work to bear in evaluating, and rejecting, the relevance of course materials and saw that it raised questions which challenged their own orientation to work and careers.

### Relevance and Reproduction

"The Advance of Capitalist Production develops a working class which by education tradition and habit looks upon the conditions of that mode of production as self-evident laws of nature." (Marx, quoted in Thompson 1989)

Students come to colleges with knowledge of the world of work: Part-time students are in employment and full-time students generally have part-time jobs to supplement any financial support they receive from the LEA or, more typically, from parents/guardians. Their knowledge and experience obviously reflect the existing social relations of production and provides the framework against which students evaluate the 'relevance' of their course. Their framework is one which recognises the existing social and sexual division of labour as 'natural' and is, as writers such as Willis (1977), Hall (1983), and Bates in Bates & Rowland (1988) argue, laden with socially reproductive possibilities. As Hall says

"[W]hat, under our present socio-economic system, 'experience' teaches is .. how to be subordinate, how to be second or third rate .."  
(Hall 1983 p8)

The notions of relevance employed by students to evaluate and criticise elements of their course appears to be unrelated to the direct relevance of course activities to their knowledge of what tasks they would be called upon to perform in work; rather the criticism was that these elements of the course content set out to challenge the 'natural' order of class and gender relations, and the questions this inevitably raised about the economic system which produces such relations. The concept of relevance which the students used to evaluate the relevance of the course reflected not the students experience of what they were required to do at work, but their recognition and acceptance of the hierarchical principles on which work is organised. The course at Nash College set out with the conscious purpose of examining

"..how society is organised and structured, and consider how far things could be organised differently." (students handbook)

The challenge which this posed to the students' understanding of the natural order of things seems to have provoked the criticisms about the relevance of the course. In the section of this chapter dealing with group work it was argued that the adverse reaction to this feature of the course was that it offended against the students' understanding of the principles on which the distribution of rewards are determined. An important element of the value system for students whose primary orientation to their course is instrumental, who choose to pursue a business studies course to improve their job prospects, is that rewards are distributed according to effort:

"[F]rom my kind of background, you don't get anywhere unless you actually - not literally - fight for it, but you've got to fight for it, you know?" (André, Full-time year 2)

Indeed such beliefs form an important part of current ideology and

provide justification for the structure of the school system itself and the social structure which it serves and is reflected in the characterisation of education as the key to upward mobility and society as a meritocracy. Course materials which attribute important functions to class and gender in determining the distribution of life chances do not fit easily with such an ideology and challenge the beliefs which students hold about work and the economy generally - effectively such course materials challenge their need to believe in their ability to improve their situation through college courses. The evidence presented here indicates that rather than having their orientation towards their future position in the labour market shaped by their participation in FE, young people bring the elements of such an orientation to their courses. This orientation reflects the hierarchical ordering of the occupational structure and belief in the meritocratic distribution of jobs within that structure. The students in this study actively rejected and endorsed the elements of their courses which reinforced their preexisting orientation to the labour market.

As has already been indicated it was not possible to gather any interview data from the students concerned, but it is suggested that there is great significance in the comment that the course was 'more like Sociology', given the widespread, commonsense view of this as a 'subversive' subject. The students' criticisms were not based upon the irrelevance of the course material to their day to day jobs (subsequent cohorts of students, who were interviewed, had no such criticisms of the revised course materials, even though they bore no more direct relevance to their jobs than did the original ones) but the questions that it raised about the existing social structure were not only uncomfortable but challenged the very basis on which their participation in the courses depended: there is little sense in making an investment which you know from the outset will never pay off.

While the course at Nash College had not changed in response to the criticisms of employers' representatives, the criticisms of students had had a much greater effect. Teachers had been able to resist the criticisms of employers' representatives by arguing that the course was aimed at developing relevant skills rather than any particular subject knowledge. These arguments were successful not only because the teachers were able to argue that the course design which focused on the development of skills was specified by BTEC after consultation with employers, but also because many of the employers representatives were YTS Managing Agents and would find it difficult to contradict such arguments given the emphasis on skills in the design of YTS courses. As Apple says the group which wins is the one which can encompass most other groups views within its own ideology. (Apple 1985)

### Conclusion

This chapter has presented an analysis of the attitudes and aspirations of young people following a business studies course at Nash college. The purpose of the discussion has been to examine the extent to which young peoples' attitudes to work have been influenced by their experience of following a BTEC business studies course.

The discussion in this chapter has taken place against the background of the intentions of BTEC to create a course which prepared young people for entry to deskilled clerical jobs. BTEC's project (along with that of the other major validating agency, the NCVQ) has been characterised in chapter 3 as being an attempt to change the relationship between qualifications and jobs from a credentialist one to a functional one. The intention of these agencies is the creation of a scheme of qualifications in which the content is intended to be closely related to the 'deskilled' jobs

likely to be available in the future. Underlying the creation of these agencies was the intention to assist in the creation of a more flexible labour market by shifting the balance of power even more decisively in favour of employers. It has been argued in chapter 5 that BTEC courses were designed to assist in this process by producing young people with attitudes appropriate to employment in a number of low skill insecure jobs.

Students do not experience courses directly in the form prescribed by BTEC. The evidence in this and preceding chapters has focused on the role of teachers in interpreting BTEC's requirements and translating them into the course which students follow. The evidence in this chapter has shown that the role of their college course in shaping students' attitudes towards entry to work is, at its strongest, limited.

This chapter has shown the values which students brought to the course reflected an understanding of the current division of labour. The motivation which the young people interviewed held towards entry to their course was instrumental - the qualification was simply a means of achieving a better 'managerial' job in the future. Students reacted to their course and evaluated its relevance in terms of how far it reinforces their interpretation of 'the way the world is' and rejected course content which did not fit with dominant interpretations of the 'natural order of things':

"[E]ither totally without examination, as unthinkable, or at the cost of the double negation which inclines agents to make a virtue of necessity, that is, to refuse what is already refused and to love the inevitable." (Bourdieu, 1977)

It is possible to be both optimistic and pessimistic about the reaction of students in evaluating courses on the basis of its relevance to the world of work as it exists at the moment, as described above. Earlier chapters have argued that the promotion of courses which stress the need for the development of skills are intended to facilitate the emergence of a "new improved" labour market by producing a workforce equipped with a range of low level transferable skills and appropriate attitudes to flexibility. The optimistic view is that such a project will be resisted by students/ trainees who will evaluate any such courses on the basis of their relevance to the current organisation of work, and not some idealised labour market in the future. Such optimism must be qualified as the students in this study did not evaluate their course in terms of its content - they seemed prepared to tolerate any content which did not challenge accepted values concerning the distribution of rewards.

The pessimistic view is the insight given into the difficulties facing those whose interests lie in education let alone promoting change through their work as teachers. As Watts (1983) says, if vocational education is to merit such a title, rather than to be indoctrination it must be allowed to call the status quo in to question. The evidence presented here indicates the extent to which such questioning is resisted by students whose future aspirations and hence participation in college courses depend upon accepting one particular representation of the status quo.

## NOTES

1. At the time the field work was undertaken the entry qualifications specified by BTEC for entry to National Level business studies courses were as follows:

- a) 4 GCSE passes at grade C or above.
- b) A BTEC First Qualification
- c) An Acceptable CPVE profile
- d) Successful completion of the college's exceptional admission procedure (Each college had to determine its own policy for admitting students who did not satisfy any of the other criteria)
- e) If the applicant was aged over the age of 19 the college had discretion to admit her/him on the basis of age and experience.

Since September 1992 BTEC no longer specifies entry qualifications. In order to bring BTEC courses into line with NCVQ requirements there are now no formal entry requirements. The abolition of entry requirements reflects the desire to remove 'artificial' barriers to entry to particular qualifications and courses associated with them. It also reflects the desire to 'improve' the operation of the labour market.

2. As a part of their course full-time students undertook a two week work experience placement in each year of the course. Most full-time students have part-time jobs with which to supplement their income; most such jobs are in the personal services sector, particularly in retailing and catering.

3. The students continued to hold their view of the values on which a business studies course was based, despite their experience of the course.



The course team stated their commitment, in course guides given to both staff and students, to an approach which was not organisational and not entrepreneurial and which can as easily be seen as general education as training. For example, the elements of the course dealing with the Market, described by Dean in the extract from his interview quoted in the text, deals with the nature of a market; the notion of market forces; and the concept of market failure. This section of the course concluded with an assignment defending the reaction of a consortium of headteachers who are proposing to co-operate with each other rather than compete in the way implicit in the 1988 Education Act.

## CHAPTER 10

### CONCLUSIONS

#### Introduction

This chapter draws together the arguments in the previous chapters about the underlying purposes of BTEC courses in terms of the creation of a clerical labour market and the reasons why such purposes have not been achieved focusing on the reactions of teachers and students. The analysis is set against the background of the influence of the 'New Right' in introducing market forces into education which has brought changes to both the context and processes of FE. The provisions of the 1988 Education Act and the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992 are examined in terms of the promotion of a more 'consumer responsive' FE system. The changes to qualifications brought about by the work of the NCVQ are examined and the tensions between the approaches of 'traditional' BTEC courses and those validated by NCVQ are discussed. It is argued that, despite the overall intention to increase the influence of 'the market' in FE, these tensions reflect a political battle being fought over education by elements of the 'New right' in conservative politics. The practical expression of this conflict in the 1992 specification for BTEC National level courses is analysed.

#### THE OBJECTIVES OF BTEC COURSES

It has been argued throughout this thesis that underlying BTEC's curricular reforms (and also underlying the reforms associated with other agencies active in vocationalising the curriculum) lies an intention to recast the relationship between qualifications and the labour market. The

existing relationship has been characterised as 'credentialist' (Collins 1979). In such a relationship educational qualifications are used by employers as benchmarks for recruitment for jobs. The hierarchical ordering of qualifications both reflects and perpetuates the hierarchical structure of occupations as employers use the possession of qualifications as a way of restricting the pool of potential applicants for particular jobs (Hussain 1981). In such a model the relationship between jobs and qualifications is not a static one, as the number of people who hold a particular qualification increases then the qualification becomes devalued. For example, in the fairly recent past the qualifications necessary for entry to training as an accountant have increased from 'A' level standard to degree standard as the numbers of people holding 'A' levels has increased. In a credentialist model the content of qualifications is irrelevant - a degree in chemistry is as valid as a degree in business studies for entry to accountancy training - the importance of qualifications is their distribution.

The intention underlying the design of BTEC courses was to move towards a functional relationship between the content of qualifications and the content of jobs, where the design of qualifications reflects the design of jobs (cf. Tipton 1983). In the functional model the substance of qualifications reflects the day to day practice of the jobs of the people who hold them. The functional model can also be described as a training model; however there are differences between BTEC's functional model and the training model. In the training model people are taught to do those things which their current jobs demand, the content of jobs precedes the design of training. The model adopted in BTEC courses reflects a concern with the nature of jobs in the future: the design of the courses precedes and anticipates the design of jobs. As was argued in the first

part of this thesis the intention has been to facilitate the transformation of the clerical labour market. The assumptions on which these courses are based reflects a view of work in the future in which young people participate in an idealised neo-liberal labour market in which they are expected to have a number of jobs which demand generic rather than specific skills in jobs which have been transformed (or, in the perspective offered in this thesis, deskilled) by the application of new technology to clerical work. The intention that underlies BTEC courses is that of promoting reform of the labour market in the interests of employers through the creation of a free market in which generalised labour power is bought and sold without restriction. Similar intentions underlie the interventions in education at all levels which aim to change young peoples' relationship with the labour market - many such interventions have incorporated the promotion of "Enterprise" which Coffield (1991) argues took on the role of the *Zeitgeist* of the 1980's.

The major innovation associated with such interventions has been the concern with the processes of learning - BTEC, TVEI and CPVE courses all demanded experiential, integrated courses based on student activities. It was argued in chapter 3 that changes to the funding of vocational education and training have given power to the MSC and its successors to determine the practices of teachers in the classroom. For example, TVEI brought extra funding contingent on the adoption of desired changes to teaching and learning which gave the opportunity for the MSC to buy its way into secondary school classrooms at a time when base budgets were being cut. Similarly, the Enterprise in Higher Education initiative allows TEED to offer increases in funding to Universities, provided that changes to the style of courses are adopted. Chapter 3 argued that the assumptions and practices of vocational courses share many features with the principles

of progressive education (See also Avis 1991, Dale 1979, Harland 1987, Hodgkinson 1991, Mason 1988). It was argued that these principles were intended to promote the interests of employers by facilitating the development of a flexible labour market by emphasising the need for, and desirability of exercising, certain transferable skills: the courses were based upon an ideology which was intended to change the attitudes of teachers and students towards industry and commerce (Moore 1988, Rikowski 1992).

A major argument of the thesis has been that the curricular reforms introduced by BTEC and other innovations such as TVEI and NCVQ reflect an intention to change the balance of power between educational and industrial interests in determining the contents of the curriculum. Such intentions are not necessarily achieved; paradoxically even though the changes are often justified on the basis of their relevance to the 'real world of work' their relationship to the demands of particular employers and to the experiences of both students and teachers is an abstract rather than real one. This may be because, in a capitalist economy, there cannot be a continuing functional relationship between education and training and the design of jobs. Such a relationship would imply a reduction in the power of employers to design and redesign the labour process in the pursuit of greater profits. The lack of congruence between the 'real world' and the demands of vocational courses means that they are not valued as an end in themselves by any of the parties (Thais & Wheeler 1989).

### **RESPONSES TO THE COURSES**

This thesis has illustrated the role of BTEC as a mediating agency

standing between and interpreting the requirements of employers and communicating their 'demands' to colleges. Teachers have responded to the demands of the new courses in a variety of ways: some have seen the courses as 'old wine in new bottles' and adapted their practice very little in response (e.g. The BTEC Higher teachers at Nash College). Others have adopted the form of the courses but view their purposes in traditional terms, for example the teachers at Wyvern college had adopted the language of BTEC - student centredness, assignments etc. - while maintaining their existing practices and viewing the purposes of the courses as straightforward occupational socialisation. For some, the ambiguities surrounding the concept of vocational education has allowed the development of courses which reflect some of the practices of 'progressive education'. Nonetheless the evidence offered in this thesis suggests that the differing responses by teachers is not significant in terms of outcomes. The courses in both colleges which were studied produced young people who held qualifications which were recognised as credentials by employers. This was the case even though the teachers in Nash college justified their practices in terms other than the preparation of young people for entry to the labour market.

The students interviewed in this study had a perspective on the purposes of the courses which are closest to the training model described above: students were committed to a view of their courses as being a direct preparation for work in managerial positions. The account of their views given in chapter 9 indicated that they interpreted the value of their course in terms of its 'relevance'; the model of relevance employed by students was not a consistent one and was used more as a term of approval for knowledge which reinforced their tacit understanding of the natural ordering of society: what Giddens (1984) has called their practical

consciousness.

The findings of this study have shown that, rather than having their expectations and occupational aspirations shaped by their experiences in the college, students already had a clear perception of the nature of their future roles and the demands of those roles. It was argued in chapter 9 that these perceptions were not necessarily accurate reflections of the nature of the roles which the students would be called upon to perform. Nonetheless the students used their perceptions of the knowledge appropriate to these idealised future roles to endorse or reject the 'relevance' of the course materials. The students interviewed demonstrated an instrumental orientation to their courses. They were clear about the reasons why they valued the courses, which related to the 'pay-off' in terms of increased access to managerial jobs. The values which students brought to the courses meant that they were reluctant to engage with the educational opportunities which the courses offered. Students saw their courses as an investment, the return for which would be entry to a higher position in the occupational hierarchy, they were therefore unwilling to explore issues of gender and class which challenged the very values on which their participation in the courses depended.

The question which was posed in the initial chapter of this thesis was what might the relationship be between participation in a BTEC business studies and the preparation of young people for entry into the labour market. The analysis offered in this thesis argues that is not possible to answer such a question by referring to a single relationship. Rather the relationship must be understood as the outcome of a bargaining process between the various parties involved. It has been argued that there has

been a clear intention to reduce the power of teachers through a series of attempts to reduce their autonomy and to increase their accountability to employers interests. Such moves have however, been less effective in acting as a restraint on teachers than the attitudes and expectations of the students themselves. Nonetheless the desire to reduce the power of teachers continues to be a dominant theme of 'reforms' of FE. The remaining sections of this chapter examines the nature and direction of recent reforms and their implications for teachers and students following BTEC courses.

### **THE STRUCTURE AND PROCESSES OF F.E.**

It was argued in chapter 2 that the influence of the 'New Right' could be seen in all areas of education. The argument was made that the underlying intention of the New Right was to increase the influence of the market in all sectors of public service. Attempts to promote the market have been made through changes to the context of FE - its funding and the institutional arrangements for governing colleges - and also to the processes of FE, that is to the ways in which FE is 'Delivered'. The focus at each level has been to reduce the perceived producer dominance in FE and to introduce a more consumer oriented service. There has been conflict amongst those promoting reform as to the purpose of reforms. Within the overall intention of promoting the market, the neo-liberal right have seen 'the consumer' as abstract employers demanding certain types of labour in the future. The focus of neo-liberal reforms has therefore been on the process of FE. These reforms, which include the development of BTEC courses, have focused on changing what students and teachers do in teaching and learning. The influence of neo-conservative reforms, on the other hand, has been more concerned with the maintenance of standards, through attempting to reverse the alleged decline in standards in



education. Such reform has been focused on changing the influence of real employers in FE, through changes to funding mechanisms which give greater influence to employers and their representatives and through the development of "Industry defined standards of competence" for qualifications validated by NCVQ.

The intention of the government to make FE "more responsive to the market" is a theme which permeates the daily lives of teachers in colleges. This intention is reflected in a number of policy initiatives which have addressed the question of market forces in a number of different ways and which were discussed in chapter 3.

The 1988 Education Reform Act brought about a change in the size and composition of the governing bodies of FE colleges which was intended to make FE more responsive to the demands of business. The Secretary of State has powers under the Act to approve the composition of governing bodies and has indicated that bodies with more than 20 members would not be approved; since the Act the average size of governing bodies has reduced from 28 to 19 (Graystone 1992). These smaller bodies were given the power to hire and fire staff and to exercise greater control over college budgets. The Act specifies that at least 50% of the membership must be representatives of employers and co-opted interests and that not more than 20% of the members should be LEA nominees: the intention to replace local authority control with local business control is apparent. Now, under the 1992 Act FE governing bodies will no longer be required to have LEA representatives : the intention to progressively replace local authority control with local business control is apparent. Since the 1988 Act groups representing employment interests are the only ones to have increased their representation. The effects of the changes have been to

give disproportionate representation to certain groups: business dominates over community interests; Black and Asian interests are under-represented and men hold the overwhelming majority (82.8%) of places on governing bodies (Ibid.). Similarly the composition of TECs, which use public money to organise the provision of Vocational Education and Training, reflects the intention to give preeminence to business interests. The framework for the composition of the TECs is prescribed by government, at least two thirds of the directors must be drawn from senior executives in local businesses. TECs are unelected and unaccountable, established as private companies they have no obligation to account to parliament or the communities which they serve for the £2.4 billion which they spent in 1991/92 (Beckett 1992).

Further changes to the structure and organisation of FE are brought about by the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. This Act attempts to subject FE colleges more completely to the market mechanism. The intention to promote competition for funds amongst colleges was noted above. Pressure is already apparent to reduce costs in order to compete more effectively: the chair of the Colleges Employers Forum (CEF) has indicated that the existing conditions of service of lecturing staff (contained in a document referred to as the silver book) must be abolished (TES 14/1/92). The Principal of one FE college has produced a paper for the governors entitled "The Market for Further Education" in which the college is identified as being in competition with the Universities. The strategy which is contemplated to promote this competition is to reduce the unit costs in the college by increasing the weekly class contact of staff by 25% and reducing the salaries of senior lecturers. The pressure to reduce staff costs has parallels in those experienced in the Polytechnic Sector when colleges there were transferred out of local authority control

in 1988. Changes to the funding of Higher Education have produced larger class sizes and an overall increase in productivity. The intention of the government to promote efficiency in FE colleges by increasing the number of students without a parallel increase in funding has been referred to in chapter 3. There is also an intention to make colleges more 'business-like' through changing the pay structures for groups of teachers: currently staff at all levels have their pay determined through national agreements and the vast majority are paid on salary scales. The government are reported by the leader of the CEF to be determined to replace this system with one in which individual members of staff will be paid on individual rates of pay agreed between them and college managements. An essential element of this will be the introduction of performance related pay and the abolition of national collective bargaining over pay for college managers. (Ward 1992).

While there is clearly pressure to achieve savings in FE through increased class sizes there are contradictory pressures arising out of changes to the processes of FE. These changes are implicit in the design and Development of new courses for BTEC and other bodies which have occurred in response to the work of the NCVQ, representing the new neo-conservative consensus over FE.

### CHANGES IN THE PROCESSES OF FE

Courses accredited by the NCVQ reflect a concern with a traditional training model of FE in which the courses offered should reflect the type of abilities required in current jobs. The creation of employer dominated 'Industry Lead Bodies' to specify the competences necessary for achieving qualifications has led to a focus on the specific abilities necessary for the performance of a particular job (Finegold et al. 1990, Hodgkinson 1991).

The design of these qualifications contradicts the assumption on which neo-liberal reforms, such as those associated with BTEC, are based, i.e. that the interests of employers are best served by courses which aim to develop general transferable skills. The courses accredited by NCVQ focus on outcomes - on measurable behavioural competences - rather than the processes of learning, reversing the trend in vocational education during the previous decade. It has been argued throughout this thesis that the emphasis on learning processes rather than the outcome of learning reflected a concern to develop transferable process skills seen as necessary for the operation of a flexible clerical labour market. The role of the NCVQ in accrediting courses is based on completely different assumptions about the purpose of FE (Jackson 1992) from those of BTEC: courses accredited by NCVQ are intended to be assessments of an individual's competence in a particular job at a particular point in time whereas the latest BTEC specification still retains a characteristic commitment to the importance of promoting flexibility in the future employment of students:

".. BTEC qualifications aim to provide a broad educational foundation which will equip students for a range of careers in a rapidly changing world." (BTEC April 1992)

The changes made to the BTEC First award in order to gain NCVQ approval in 1991 resulted in a course which was specified in terms of the type of tasks undertaken by very junior office workers - although the young workers were seen in this specification as virtual automatons requiring constant supervision and direction. BTEC officers now speak publicly about the 'externally engineered disaster' of the changes made to the to First Award in order to meet the demands of NCVQ. The decision by the government to establish a General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ), as part of a larger project with the aim of establishing parity of esteem for vocational and academic qualifications,

has given BTEC the opportunity to distance its qualifications from NVQ's. GNVQs are to be awarded for the attainment of knowledge and understanding which underpins the occupational skills specified in NVQs. As the BTEC First was intended to deliver both NVQ standards and the underpinning knowledge, teachers were told early in 1992 that the NVQ elements of the BTEC First award were optional. There is clearly a power struggle being conducted between the two bodies which are competing for the right to be recognised as the major force in vocational education and training - to the extent that a senior BTEC officer announced at a conference that he was unable to state what BTEC's policy on grading was, given the political difficulties surrounding BTEC's relationship with NCVQ.

The decision to develop GNVQs has produced problems for both BTEC and the NCVQ. NCVQ has the difficulty of developing a course which is, in effect, very similar to existing educational qualifications. Unlike NVQ awards the GNVQ is to be based on the assessment of knowledge rather than ability to perform a number of predefined tasks. Developing the new award poses the NCVQ the problem of maintaining the credibility of its existing approach to vocational qualifications. The pilot projects for GNVQs reflect the form of NVQ awards, being unit-based and offering the possibility of credit accumulation and the assessment of prior learning. In order to move towards the GNVQ model BTEC has had to make substantial changes to its courses. While BTEC officers claim that these changes represent part of the normal pattern of review of their "Products", changes have necessarily had to be made to ensure the compatibility of the new course with the GNVQ. The new specification for the BTEC National incorporates many of the features of the plan for FE set out in the New Training Initiative, discussed in chapter 2; entry qualifications

have been abolished and the courses are open access; the courses are not of a prescribed length, but depend solely on the student's ability to achieve the standard of competence specified.

The significant difference in terms of the practices of teachers is that the new BTEC National course is intended to be based on an individualised learning programme for each student. BTEC publications focus on the need for each student to be given opportunities for the Accreditation of Prior Learning/Achievement (APL/A), individually negotiated learning contracts and access to assessment on demand (or as near as possible). The course is specified in terms of 'outcomes' against which students' performance is to be assessed, although these outcomes are expressed in terms of knowledge. For example, Outcome 1.1 is "Define and contrast the structures of a range of organisations" (BTEC April 1992). These outcomes are further broken down into "Performance Criteria" - lists of criteria by which each outcome will be measured - "Range" Statements - what might in other contexts be called the detailed syllabus - and "Evidence Indicators" which "illustrate suitable assessment activities and media." (based on BTEC April 1992). The specification of course content in such detail is presented by BTEC as a bonus to teachers who no longer have to concern themselves with writing assessment criteria. However, it represents a further stage in the deskilling of teachers discussed in chapter 7. The pursuit of 'National Standards' has led to a tightening of the controls exercised over teachers and leaves little scope for them to exercise professional discretion over the content of courses or to control assessment. Changes to the style of courses allied to changes in the reduction of funding subject teachers to contradictory pressures. College managers are seeking increases in productivity measured in terms of staff/student ratios: the specifications of courses demand more individual

counselling and negotiation of learning contracts. The evidence presented from colleges taking part in the pilot programmes for the new BTEC National specification offers evidence of the consequences of these pressures for the autonomy of teachers. In order to 'free' themselves for individual tutorials, staff at pilot colleges have developed courses which depend heavily on the students participating in 'learning workshops'. These are unstaffed open learning centres where students follow open learning packages, or computer-based training (CBT): a part-time student could, according to the model given in BTEC's specification, spend up to half of their day in college in such a workshop.

The discussion in chapter 7 of the deskilling of teachers indicated that the staff at Nash college had kept control of their 'labour process' by designing a course which reflected their self-image as educators: their activity in managing learning was central to the courses which they had designed. The courses were defended against the management view that the material was all prepared and that the material *was* the course; if the courses existed independently of the teachers then little remained of their self image as educators. The workshops which feature so heavily in the pilot programmes mean exactly that much of the course exists independently of the teachers. Teachers are dependent on the authors of open learning and CBT packages, they have no say in the detailed content of the packages, they exercise no discretion over the pace or pattern of learning: for this part of the course they are deskilled in the classic Bravermanesque sense. The teachers who designed the programme in this way did not do so in order to deskill themselves, they did so in order to try to reconcile the conflicting demands of new courses and of college managements concerned to maximise use of resources: failure to respond to either demand would result in penalties for the teachers concerned.

Harland's (1987) characterisation of schools and colleges acting rather like sales reps. offering a 'product' over which they have little influence in designing seems to offer a convincing account of the direction in which the new market oriented FE is moving as a result of the material pressures to which colleges are subjected. The full consequences of such pressures for change on teachers and students alike remain to be evaluated. It is impossible to read off the responses of teachers and students from the intentions of policy makers: participation in FE is a political experience in the widest sense of the word for all concerned. This thesis sets out to add to the arguments with which the political debate is conducted.



## References

Althusser, L. (1971). Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses. In Cosin B. (ed.) *Education, Structure and Society*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Apple M (1985). *Education and Power*. Boston: Ark.

Applebaum E. and Albin P. (1989). Computer Rationalisation and the Transformation of Work: Lessons From The Insurance Industry. In Wood S. (ed) *The Transformation of Work?* London: Hyman.

Armour H. (1986). *New Technology in The Office Environment*. Aldershot: Gower.

Ashburner (1987). *The Effects of New Technology on Employment in the Service Sector*. Unpublished Ph.d. Thesis. Aston University.

Ashton D, Maguire M, & Spilsbury M (1987). Labour Market Segmentation and the Structure of the Youth Labour Market. In Brown P and Ashton D N (eds): *Education Unemployment and Labour Markets*. Lewes: Falmer Press.

Ashton D, Maguire M and Spilsbury M (1991). *Restructuring the Labour Market: The implications for Youth*. London: Macmillan.

Atkinson D. (1986). *Changing Working Patterns: How Companies Achieve Flexibility to Meet New Needs*. London: National Economic Development Office.

Atkinson P. & Delamont S. (1985). Bread & Dreams or Bread & Circuses? A Critique of 'Case Study' Research in Education. In Shipman M. (Ed) *Educational Research: Principles, Policies & Practice*. Lewes: Falmer Press.

Avis J (1982). Social and Technical Relations: The Case of Further Education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol 2 no 2. pp 145-161.

Avis J (1991). The Strange Fate of Progressive Education. In Cultural Studies University of Birmingham (eds.) *Education Limited: Schooling Training and the New Right since 1979*. London: Unwin Hyman .

BEC (1975). *A First Consultation Document*. London: Business Education Council

BEC 20/1/76. unpublished minutes of 11th BEC council meeting, containing Draft of BEC 1st policy statement. London: Business Education Council

BEC 30/4/76. unpublished minutes of 1st BEC Research and Development committee. London: Business Education Council

BEC 29/6/76. unpublished minutes of 14th BEC council meeting. London: Business Education Council

BEC October 1976. (unpublished) Report of the Education Committee working Party on Secretarial Studies Courses presented to 18th BEC Council meeting. London: Business Education Council

BEC (1977). BEC National Awards Course Specification. London: Business Education Council

BEC 7/3/77. unpublished minutes of 4th BEC Research and Development Committee meeting. London: Business Education Council

BEC 4/4/77. Draft Guidelines on the Implementation of Policy contained in unpublished minutes of 19th BEC council meeting. London: Business Education Council

BEC Winter 1979. *A Brief Introduction for Employers*. London: Business and Technician Council. London: Business Education Council

BEC 1979/80. *BEC - A Brief Guide for Employers*. London: Business Education Council. London: Business Education Council

BEC January 1980. *Report on the First Annual Review of Standards*. London: Business Education Council

BEC March 1980. *Assessment and Examinations in BEC Courses*. London: Business Education Council

BEC Autumn 1980. *Notes of Guidance to Centres on the Implications of Developments in Micro-Technology for the Teaching of Courses Leading to BEC General, BEC National, and BEC Higher Awards*. London: Business Education Council

BEC (1982a). *A Brief Guide to BEC Courses*. London: Business Education Council

BEC (1982b). *Times Are Changing - A film from BEC - Notes For Users*. London: Business Education Council

BEC (1982c). *A Parents Guide to BEC Courses*. London: Business Education Council

BEC Spring 1983. *BEC Courses to Meet the Needs of Business*. London: Business Education Council

BTEC (1984). *Policies and Priorities into the 1990's*. London: Business and Technician Education Council.

BTEC (1984a). *BTEC Education Policy: an Agenda for Discussion*. London: Business and Technician Education Council.

BTEC (1984b). *A Report on the Responses to the Discussion Document on Education Policy*. London: Business and Technician Council.

BTEC May 1985. *Review of BTEC National Awards in Business and Related Studies. Report on the Council's Programme of Consultation and Research*. London: Business and Technician Council.

BTEC (1986). *Common skills and Core Themes: General Guideline*. London: Business and Technician Education Council.

BTEC July 1986. *Teaching and Learning Strategies*. London: Business and Technician Education Council

BTEC September 1986. *Common Skills and Core Themes. Illustrative material & Advice*. London: Business and Technician Council.

BTEC September 1986a. *General Guideline on Assessment and Grading*. London: Business and Technician Council.

BTEC (1987). *A Teachers Guide to BTEC Courses*. London: Business and Technician Council.

BTEC March 1987. '*BTEC Update*' No 5. London: Business and Technician Council.

BTEC (1988). *BTEC Staff Development Materials*. London: Business and Technician Council.

BTEC (1988a). *Annual Report*. London: Business and Technician Council.

BTEC (1989). *Annual Report*. London: Business and Technician Education Council.

BTEC/NCVQ (1991). *Revised Specification for BTEC First Awards*. London: Business and Technician Education Council.

BTEC April 1992. *BTEC National Certificate and Diploma Business and Finance Guidelines and Core Module Specifications*. London: Business and Technician Education Council.

Ball S. (1981). *Beachside Comprehensive: A Case Study of Secondary Schooling*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ball S. (1990). *Politics and Policy Making in Education*. London: Routledge.

Barker B (1987). Pre-Vocationalism and Schooling. In Holt M. (ed) *Skills and Vocationalism: The Easy Answer*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Barker J & Downing H (1981). Word Processing and the Transformation of the Patriarchal Relations of Control in the Office. In Dale R, Esland G, Fergusson R, MacDonald M. (eds.) : *Education and the State* Vol 1. Lewes: Falmer Press.

Barr N. (1987). *The Economics of the Welfare State*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

Bates I, Clarke J, Cohen P, Finn D, Moore R, & Willis P. (1984). *Schooling for the Dole? The New Vocationalism*. Basingstoke: MacMillan.

Bates I (1989). Version of Vocationalism: An Analysis of Some Social and Political Influences on Curriculum Policy and Practice. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* Vol 10 No 2 pp 215 - 231

Bates I. & Rowland S (1988). Is Student Centred Pedagogy 'Progressive' Educational Practice? *Journal of Further & Higher Education* Vol. 12 No 3 pp 5-20

Baxter A (1987). Job Design, Progressive Education and the Correspondence between Work and Schooling. *British Journal of Education and Work* Vol 1, No 1 pp 38-43

Beckett F. (1992). Trading Places. *Times Educational Supplement* 7 Jan.

Becker G. S. (1964). *Human Capital*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Beechey V (1983). The Sexual Division of Labour and the Labour Process: A Critical Assessment of Braverman. In Wood S. (ed). *The Degradation of Work? Skill, Deskillling and the Labour Process*. London: Hutchinson.

Bellamy C. & Franklin F. (1985). BTEC's Educational Policy and Public Administration. *Teaching Politics*. Vol 14 No 2.

Berg I (1970). *Education and Jobs: The Great Training Robbery*. New York: Praeger.

Bernstein B. (1980). On The Classification and Framing of Educational Knowledge. In Bernstein B. *Class Codes and Control* vol 3. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul

Bernstein B. (1980a). The Sociology of Education: A Brief Account. in Bernstein B. *Class Codes and Control* (2nd edition) Vol 3 London: Routledge Kegan Paul.

Bird J. (1980). *Information Technology in the Office: The impact on Womens' Jobs*. Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission.

Blackburn R and Mann M (1979): *The Working Class and the Labour Market*. Basingstoke: MacMillan

Bolam R (1975). The Management of Educational Change: Towards a Conceptual Framework In Harris A, Lawn M, & Prescott W (eds) *Curriculum Innovation*. Beckenham : Croom Helm.

Bourdieu P. (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bowe R, and Whitty G. (1989). The Reopening of the GCSE Settlement: Recent Developments in the Politics of School Examinations. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* Vol 10, No 4, pp 403 -416

Bowen W. (1989). The Puny Payoff From Office Computers. In Forester T (ed.): *Computers in the Human Context: Information Technology, Productivity and People*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Bowles R and Gintis H (1976). *Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

- Braverman H. (1974). *Labor & Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Brown P (1987). *Schooling Ordinary Kids: Inequality, Unemployment and the new Vocationalism*. London: Tavistock.
- Brown P (1991). Schooling and Employment in the United Kingdom. In Ashton D & Lowe G (eds) *Making their way: Education Training and the Labour Market in Canada and Britain*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Bryman A (1988). *Quantity and Quality in Social Research*. London: Unwin Hyman.
- Buchanan D. & Boddy D (1983). *Organisations in the Computer Age: Technological Imperative and Strategic Choice*. Gower: Aldershot.
- Burawoy M. (1982). *Manufacturing Consent - Changes in The Labour Process Under Monopoly Capitalism*. London: University of Chicago Press.
- Burawoy M. (1985). *The Politics of Production*. London: University of Chicago Press
- Burgess R.G. (1982). The Unstructured Interview as Conversation. In R.G. Burgess (ed) *Field Research: A Sourcebook & Field Manual*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Burgess R. (1983). *Experiencing Comprehensive Education: A Study of Bishop McGregor School*. London: Methuen.
- Buswell C. (1984). Qualification Inflation. Pupil Investment and a Changing 6th form. In Barton L. and Walker S. *Social Crisis and Educational Resarch*. Croom Helm: Beckenham
- Buswell C. (1988). Flexible Workers for Flexible Firms? In Pollard A, Purvis J, & Walford G. *Education, Training & the New Vocationalism*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- CCCS (1981). *Unpopular Education: Schooling and Social Democracy in England Since 1944*. London: Hutchinson.
- Callaghan, J., 1976 Towards a National Debate. *Education* 22-10-76
- Cantor L. M. & Roberts I.F. (1986). *Further Education Today: A Critical Review*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Castling A. and Challis B. (1986). *Staff Development for BTEC Courses*. London: Business and Technician Education Council.
- Cathcart H. and Esland G. (1985). The Compliant Creative Worker. In Barton L & Walker S (eds.) *Education and Social Change*. Beckenham: Croom Helm.
- Child J, Loveridge R, Harvey J and Spencer A (1984). Microelectronics and the Quality of Employment in Services. In Manstrand P. (ed) *New Technology and the Future of Work and Skills*. London: Frances Pinter (Publishers). Ltd.

- Coffield F. (1992). From the Decade of Enterprise to the Decade of the TECs. *British Journal of Education and Work*. Vol 4 No 1.
- Cohen L. & Mannion L. (1989). *Research Methods in Education (2nd Ed.)* London: Routledge.
- Collins R. (1979). *The Credential Society*. London: Academic Press.
- Cooper B. (1984). 'On Explaining Change in School Subjects.' In Goodson I.F. and Ball S.J. (eds) *Defining the Curriculum: Histories and Ethnographies*. Lewes: Falmer Press.
- County of Avon (1989). *Focus on TVEI*. Bristol: Avon Further Education Development Centre.
- Crompton R. & Jones G. (1984). *White-Collar Proletariat - Gender & Deskillling in Clerical Work*. London: MacMillan.
- Crompton R. & Reid S. (1983). 'The Deskillling of Clerical Work.' In Wood S. (ed): *The Degradation of Work? - Skill, Deskillling and the Labour Process*. London: Hutchinson.
- Crompton R. & Sanderson K. (1990). *Gendered Jobs and Social Change*. London: Unwin Hyman Ltd.
- Cutler T. (1992). Vocational Training and British Economic Performance: A Further Instalment of the 'British Labour Problem'? *Work, Employment & Society*. vol.6, No. 2, pp. 161-183
- Dale R. (1979). From Endorsement to Disintegration: Progressive Education from the Golden Age to the Green Paper. *British Journal of Educational Studies*. Vol 27 no 3 p 191- 209,
- Dale R. (1985). The Background and Inception of the Technical and Vocational Initiative. In Dale R. (ed) *Education, Training and Employment: Towards a New Vocationalism?* Oxford: Pergammon Press.
- Dale R. (1986). Examining the Gift Horse's Teeth: A Tentative Examination of TVEI. In Barton L & Walker S (eds) *Youth Unemployment & Schooling*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Davies S (1990). Inserting Gender into Burawoys Theory of the Labour Process. in *Work Employment and Society*. Vol. 4 no 3 pp 391-406
- DE (1990). *Employment News* July
- DES (1969). *Report of the Committee on Technician Education Courses and Examinations* (The Haslegrave Report). London: HMSO.
- Denison E (1964). *Measuring the Contribution of Education to Economic Growth*. Paris: OECD.
- Dex S. (1982). *Black and White School Leavers*. Department of Employment Research Paper No 33. London: HMSO.
- DFE (1992). Press Statement. 12 November 1992.

- Dickinson H & Erben M (1983). The 'Technicisation' of Morality and Culture: A Consideration of the Work of Claude Grignon and its Relevance to Further Education in Britain. In Gleeson D (ed) *Youth Training and the Search for Work*. Rotledge Kegan Paul: London.
- Doeringer P. and Piore M. (1971). *Internal Labour Markets and Manpower Analysis*. Lexington: Heath Lexington Books.
- DTI (1992). *The Strategy for Skills and Enterprise: Guidance from the Secretary of State for Employment and the President of the Board of Trade*. London: Department of Trade and Industry/Employment Department.
- Easton D (1965). *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*. New York :John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Economics Association (1982). The Role of Economics in BEC National Courses. *Economics*. Vol. 18 Part 3, No 79 pp 92-95
- Edwards R. (1979). *Contested Terrain - The Transformation of the Workplace in the Twentieth Century*. London: Heinemann
- Elcock H. (1983). Disabling Professionalism: The Real Threat to Local Democracy. *Public Money*. Vol. 3 No 1.
- Elger T (1983). Braverman, Capital Accumulation and Deskillling. In Wood S. (ed.) *The Degradation of Work? Skill, Deskillling and the Labour Process*. London: Hutchinson.
- Employment Department (1992). *Work Related Further Education: A Guidance Handbook for TECs and Colleges*. London: Employment Depatment Group.
- Esland G. (1981). Teaching and Learning as the Organisation of Knowledge. In Young M. (Ed.) *Knowledge and Control: New Directions for the Sociology of Education*. London: Collier Macmillan.
- Esland G. and Cathcart H. (1981). Education and the Corporate Economy. In Unit 2, course E353 *Education Society and the State*. Milton Keynes: The Open University.
- Evans J. (1982). The Worker and the Workplace. In Friedrichs G and Schaff A (eds). *Microelectronics and Society: For Better or Worse?* Oxford: Pergammon Press.
- Evans J & Davies B (1988). The Rise and Fall of New Vocationalism. In Pollard A, Purvis J, & Walford G (eds) *Education Training and the New Vocationalism*. Open University Press: Milton Keynes
- Fay P (1988). Open and Student Centered Learning: Evangelism and Heresy. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*. Vol. 12 No.1 pp 2-12
- FEU (1986). *Assessment, Quality and Competence: Staff Training Issues for NCVQ*. York: Longman for the Further Education Unit.
- Finegold D & Soskice D (1988). The Failure of Training in Britain: Analysis and Prescription. *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*. Vol. 4. No 3 pp 21-54.

- Finegold D., Keep E., Milliband D., Raffe D., & Spours K. (1990). *A British Baccalaureat*. London: Institute for Public Policy Research.
- Finn D (1985). *Training Without Jobs: New deals and Broken Promises*. London: Macmillan.
- Forbes S & Miller J (1988). What Should Employers Ask of the Education Systems? *Personnel Management*. March pp 32-36.
- Friedmann A (1977). *Industry and Labour: Class Struggle at Work and Monopoly Capitalism*. London: Macmillan
- Friedman M. & Friedman R., (1980). *Free to Choose*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Fritzell C. (1987). Relative Autonomy in Educational Theory. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. Vol. 8 no 1 pp 23 - 35
- Gallie D (1991). Patterns of Skill Change: Upskilling, Deskillling or the Polarisation of Skills? *Work Employment and Society*. Volume 5 No 3. pp 319-352.
- Giddens A. (1984). *The Constitution of Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Gill C. (1985). *Work Unemployment and the New Technology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Glaser B & Strauss A (1968). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. London: Wiedenfield and Nicholson.
- Gleeson D. (1989). *The Paradox of Training*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Gleeson D. (1990). Skills Training and its Alternatives. In Gleeson D. (ed.) *Training and its Alternatives*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Gleeson and Mardle (1980). *Further Education or Training? A Case Study in the Theory and Practice of Day Release Education*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul
- Goldthorpe J. (et al.). (1980). *Social Mobility & Class Structure in Modern Britain*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Goldwyn (1978). Now The Chips Are Down (condensed version of script of BBC 2 TV programme screened March 1978). In Forester T.(ed.) (1980): *The Micro-Electronics Revolution*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Gorz A (1976). Technology, Technicians and Class Struggle. In Gorz A (ed.) *The Division of Labour*. Brighton: Harvester Press.
- Graystone J. (1992). F.E.'s Governing Bodies: An Update. *NATFHE Journal* Vol 17 no 1 pp 10 - 13.
- Griffin C. (1985). *Typical Girls? Young Women from School to the Job Market*. London: Routledge Kegan Paul.



- Gunn S. (1989). *Revolution of the New Right*. London: Pluto Press.
- Habermas J. (1967). *Legitimation Crisis*. London : Heinemann Educational Books
- Hakim C. (1987). *Research Design: Strategy and Choices in the Design of Social Research*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Hakim C. (1990). Core and Periphery in Employers Workforce Strategies: Evidence from the 1987 ELUS Survey. *Work, Employment and Society*. Vol 4 No 2 pp 157 - 188
- Hall, S. (1981). Schooling State and Society. In Dale R, Esland G, Fergusson R, MacDonald M. (eds.). *Education and the State* Vol 1. Lewes: Falmer Press.
- Hall S. (1983). Education in Crisis. In Wolpe A. and Donald J. (eds.) *Is there anyone here form Education?*. London: Pluto Press.
- Hammersley M & Turner G (1980). Conformist Pupils? In P Woods (ed.) *Pupil Strategies*. Beckenham: Croom Helm.
- Harland J (1987). The TVEI Experience: Issues of Control, Response and the Professional Role of Teachers. In Gleeson D (ed.) *TVEI & Secondary Education; A Critical Evaluation*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press
- Harris C., et al. (1989). Office Automation: Making it Pay Off. In Forester T (ed.) *Computers in the Human Context: Information Technology, Productivity and People*. Basil Blackwell. Oxford.
- Hartley D (1987). The Convergence of Learner Centred Pedagogy in Primary and Further Education in Scotland 1965-1985. *British Journal of Educational Studies*. Vol 35 No 2 P 115-128
- Hayek F. (1980). Trade Unions - The Biggest Obstacle. *Journal of Economic Affairs*. Vol 1. No 1 pp 51 - 52.
- Hines C. & Searle G. (1979). *Automatic Unemployment*. London: Earth Resources Research Ltd.
- Hodgkinson P (1991). NCVQ and the 16 - 19 Curriculum. *British Journal of Education and Work*. Vol 4 No 3.
- Holloway J and Piciotto S (1978). Towards a Materialist Theory of the State. In Holloway J and Piciotto S (eds) *State and Capital: A Marxist Debate*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Holt M (1987). Vocationalism on the Hoof. In Holt M (ed.) *Skills and Vocationalism*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Howe G. (1983). Agenda for Liberal Conservatism. *Journal of Economic Affairs*. Vol 3 No. 3. pp 84 - 89.
- Hoyle E (1975). Organisational Change in Education. In Harris A, Lawn M, & Prescott W. *Curriculum Innovation*. Beckenham : Croom Helm.

- Hussain A. (1981). The Economy and Society in Capitalist Societies. In Dale R, Esland G, Fergusson R, MacDonald M. (eds.) *Education and the State*. Vol 1. Lewes: Falmer Press.
- Hustler D (1988). Its Not Like Normal Lessons: You Don't Have to Wag School Any More. In Pollard A, Purvis J, & Walford G (eds.) *Education Training and the New Vocationalism*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Huws U. (1982). *Your Job in the Eighties*. London: Pluto Press.
- Hyman R. (1980). White Collar Workers and Theories of Class. In Hyman R and Price R. (eds) *The New Working Class? White Collar Workers and Their Organisations*. Macmillan. London.
- Hyman R. (1988). Flexible Specification: Myth or Miracle? In Hyman R. & Streek W. (eds.) *New Technology and Industrial Relations*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Ingham G (1984). *Capitalism Divided? The City and Industry in British Social Development*. London: MacMillan.
- Inglis F. (1985). *The Management of Ignorance: A Political Theory of the Curriculum*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Jackson M. (1992). Just the Job? *Times Educational Supplement*. 7 Jan.
- Jamieson I. (1985). Corporate Hegemony or Pedagogic Liberation? The Schools Industry Movement. In Dale R (ed.) *Education Training and Employment*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Jenkins C. and Sherman B. (1979). *The Collapse of Work*. London: Eyre Methuen.
- Jessop B. (1982). *The Capitalist State*. Oxford: Martin Robertson.
- Johnson R (1981). Really Useful Knowledge: Radical Education And Working Class Culture 1790-1845. In Dale R, Esland G, Fergusson R, MacDonald M. (eds.). *Education and the State*. Vol. 2. Lewes: Falmer Press.
- Johnson R (1991). A New Road to Serfdom? A Critical History of the 1988 Act. In Cultural Studies University of Birmingham (ed.) *Education Limited: Schooling Training and the New Right since 1979*. Unwin Hyman: London.
- Johnson R (1991a). My New Right Education. In Cultural Studies University of Birmingham (ed.) *Education Limited: Schooling Training and the New Right since 1979*. Unwin Hyman: London.
- Jonathon R. (1987). The Youth Training Scheme & Core Skills: an Educational Analysis. In Holt M (ed.) *Skills and Vocationalism*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Jones K. (1983). *Beyond Progressive Education*. London : MacMillan

- Karabel J. and Halsey A.H. (1977) Educational Research: A Review and an Interpretation. In Karabel J. and Halsey A.H. (ed.) *Power and Ideology in Education*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Kelly M. (1984). Funny Business. *Times Higher Educational Supplement* 14/1/83
- Kling R. & Iacono S. (1989). Desktop Computerisation and the Organisation of Work. In Forester T (ed.) *Computers in the Human Context: Information Technology, Productivity and People*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Klingender F. (1958). *The Condition of Clerical Labour in Britain*. London: Martin Lawrence.
- Labour Party (1990). *Looking to the Future*. London: The Labour Party.
- Lacey C. (1970). *Hightown Grammar: The School as a Social System*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Lamborghini B. (1982). The Impact on the Enterprise. In Friedrichs G and Schaff A (eds) *Microelectronics and Society: For Better or Worse*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Lander G. (1983). Further Education for Corporatism: the Significance of the Business Education Council. In Gleeson D (ed.) *Youth Training and the Search for Work*. London: Routledge Keegan Paul
- Lander G. (1984). *Corporatist Ideologies and Education: The Case of the Business Education Council*. Unpublished Ph.d. Thesis University of London.
- Lane C. (1987). Capitalism or Culture? *Work Employment and Society* Vol. 1 No 1 pp 57 - 83
- Lane C. (1988). New Technology and Clerical Work. In Gallie D. (ed.) *Employment in Britain*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Lawn M. & Ozga J. (1988). The Educational Worker? A Reassessment of Teachers. In Ozga J (ed.) *Schoolwork: Approaches to the Labour Process*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Lee D. (1989). The Transformation of Training and The Transformation of Work in Britain. In Wood S. (ed.) *The Transformation of Work?* London: Hyman.
- Lee D, Marsden D, Rickman P, Dunscombe J, (1990). *Scheming for Youth: A Study of YTS in the Enterprise Culture*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press
- Litler C. & Salaman G. (1982). Recent Theories of The Labour Process. *Sociology* Vol. 16 p 251-269.
- Lockwood D. (1969). *The Blackcoated Worker. A Study in Class Consciousness*. London: Unwin University Books.

- Maguire M. (1991). British Labour Market Trends. In Ashton D & Lowe G (eds) *Making their way: Education Training and the Labour Market in Canada and Britain*. Open University Press: Milton Keynes.
- Marsden D. (1986). *The End of Economic Man*. Wheatsheaf: Brighton.
- Marx K. (1968). The German Ideology. In Feuer L (ed.) *Karl Marx: Selected Writings on Economics and Philosophy*. London: Faber.
- Marx K. (1977). *Capital* Vol. 1 Penguin : Harmondsworth.
- Mason C. (1988). *Government Restructuring of Vocational Education and Training 1981-1987: Local Autonomy or Dependence?* Occasional Paper No 33. School for Advanced Urban Studies. Bristol.
- Matthews J. (1990). *Tools of Change: New Technology and the Democratisation of Work*. Sydney: Pluto Press.
- McInnes J. (1988). New Technology in Scotbank: Gender, Class and Work. In Hyman R. & Streek W. (eds.) *New Technology and Industrial Relations*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- McLennan G. (1984). Capitalist State or Democratic Polity? In McLennan G, Held D, & Hall S (eds) *The idea of the Modern State*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Miller R. (1981). Low Pay, No Pay, Minimum Wages and Wages Councils. *Journal of Economic Affairs*. Vol 1 No. 3. pp 84 - 89.
- Minford P. (1982). Trade Unions Destroy a Million Jobs. *Journal of Economic Affairs*. Vol 2 No. 2. pp 73 - 75.
- Mitchell J. (1983). Case and Situational Analysis. *Sociological Review* Vol. 31 pp 187 - 211.
- Moore R (1983). Further Education Pedagogy and Production. In Gleeson D. (ed.) *Youth Training and the Search for Work*. London: RKP
- Moore R (1988). Education and the Ideology of Production. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. Vol. 8, No 2 pp 227-242
- MSC (n.d.) *Basic Skills Manual*. Sheffield: Manpower Services Commission.
- MSC (1980). *Outlook on Training: A Review of the Employment & Training Act*. London: Manpower Services Commission
- MSC (1981). *A New Training Initiative: A Consultative Document*. Sheffield: Manpower Services Commission
- MSC (1982). *The New Training Initiative: An Agenda for Action*. Sheffield: Manpower Services Commission
- MSC (April 1983). *Guideline on Content and Standards in YTS*. Sheffield: Manpower Services Commission
- MSC (1984). *Core Skills in YTS*. Sheffield: Manpower Services Commission

NCVQ (n.d.). *NCVQ News Issue 1*. London: National Council for Vocational Qualifications.

NCVQ (1987). *The National Vocational Qualification Framework*. London: National Council for Vocational Qualifications.

O'Connor M. (1993). Money Matters. *The Lecturer*. February 1993. London: NATFHE

Oppenheimer M. (1985). *White Collar Politics*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Pearce. D (1987). *An Examination of the Appropriateness of A Business Studies Curriculum*. Unpublished M.Ed. Thesis. University of Bath.

Platt J. (1988). What Can Case Studies Do? In Burgess R. (ed.) *Studies in Qualitative Methodology: Conducting Qualitative Research* Vol. 1 pp 2 - 21. London: JAI Press.

Pollert A (1988). The 'Flexible Firm': Fixation or Fact? *Work Employment and Society*. Vol. 2 No 3 pp 281 - 316

Popper K (1972). *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*. London: Hutchinson.

Raffe D (1983). Can There be an Effective Youth Unemployment Policy? In Fiddy R (ed.) *In Place of Work: Policy & Provision for the Young Unemployed*. Lewes: Falmer Press

Raffe D. (1990). The Context of the Youth Training Scheme. In Gleeson D. (ed.) *Training and its Alternatives*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Rajan A. (1984). *New Technology and employment in Insurance, Banking & Building Societies: Recent Experience & Future Impact*. (An Institute of Manpower Studies Report) Aldershot: Gower.

Rajan A (1987). Jobs and the Service Sector: A Down to Earth Look at the Promised Land. *Personnel Management*. April 1987 pp 40-44

Reeder D. (1981). A Recurring debate: Education and Industry. In Dale R, Esland G, Fergusson R, MacDonald M. (eds) *Education and the State* Vol. 2. Lewes: Falmer Press.

Reynolds D. (1984). Relative Autonomy Reconstructed. In Barton L and Walker S (1984) *Social Crisis and Educational Research*. Beckenham: Croom Helm.

Rikowski G. (1992). Work Experience Schemes and Part-time Jobs in a Recruitment Context. *British Journal of Education and Work*. Vol 5 No 1.

Riseborough G (1992). 'The Cream Team': an Ethnography of BTEC National Diploma (Catering And Hotel) Students in a Tertiary College. *British Journal of the Sociology of Education*. Vol 13 No 2. pp 215 - 244

Roberts K. (1984). *School Leavers and Their Prospects: Youth and The Labour Market in the 1980s*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

- Roessner J, Mason R, Porter A, Rossini, Schwartz a, & Nelms K. (1985). *The Impact of Automation on Clerical Employment 1985-2000*. Westport Connecticut: Quorum Books.
- Rowntree D (1985). *Educational Technology in Curriculum Development*. London: Harper and Row
- Ryan A. (1989). Roger Scruton and Neo-Conservatism In Cohen C., Bosanquet N., Ryan A., Parekh B., Keegan W., & Gress F. (eds) *The New Right: Image and Reality*. London: Runnymede Trust
- Sarup M. (1978). *Marxism and Education*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Schultz T (1977). Investment in Human Capital. In Karabel J & Halsey A H (eds.) *Power and Ideology in Education*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Seldon A. (1982). The Necessity of Unemployment. *Journal of Economic Affairs*. Vol 2 No. 3. Editorial
- Shaiken H. (1984). *Work Transformed: Automation and Labor in the Computer Age*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Shilling C. (1987). Implementing the Contract. Front Line Teachers in the TVEI Classroom. In D Gleeson (ed.) *TVEI and Secondary Education: A Critical Appraisal*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Shilling C. (1989). *Schooling for Work in Capitalist Britain*. Falmer: London
- Shilling C. (1992). Structure and Agency in the Sociology of Education. *British Journal Of the Sociology of Education*. Vol 13 No. 1 pp 69-87.
- Sikes P & Taylor M (1985). Some Problems with Defining Interpreting & Communicating Vocational Education. In Gleeson D (ed.) *TVEI and Secondary Education: A Critical Appraisal*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Simpson D., Walker J., & Love J.(eds) (1987). *The Challenge of New Technology*. Wheatsheaf, Brighton.
- Smith S. (1989). Information Technology in Banks: Taylorisation or Human Centred Systems? In Forester T (ed.) *Computers in the Human Context: Information Technology, Productivity and People*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Smith S. and Wield D. (1988). Banking on the New Technology: Co-operation, Competition and the Clearers. In Harris L., Coakley J., Croasdale M. and Evans T. (eds) *New Perspectives on the Financial System*. London: Croom Helm.
- Stewart A., Prandy K. and Blackburn R. (1980). *Social Stratification and Occupations*. London: MacMillan
- Stronach I (1989) Education Vocationalisation and Economic Recovery : The Case Against Withcraft. *British Journal of Education and Work*. Vol. 3 no1

- Sumner J. (1979). *Reading Ideologies*. London: Academic Press
- Tansley P. (1989). *Course Teams - The Way Forward in FE?* Windsor: NFER-Nelson.
- Tarsh J (1990). Graduate Employment and Degree class. *Employment Gazette*. October 1990
- Taylor C. (1986). *Employment Examined: the Right Approach to More Jobs*. Policy Study No 77. London : Centre for Policy Studies.
- TES 10/6/83. *BTEC Chiefs Plan to Wrest Influence from Colleges*.
- TES 24/5/91. Editorial: *It won't happen unless the changes are real*.
- THES 26/11/82. *Merger Could Create Powerful Force*.
- Thaiss P. & Wheeler R. (1989). 'Dissatisfaction with BTEC.' *NATFHE Journal* November/December.
- Thomas R. (1988). What is Human Resource Management? *Work Employment and Society* Vol. 2 No. 3 pp 392 - 402.
- Thompson P. (1989). *The Nature of Work: An Introduction to Debates on the Labour Process*. London:Macmillan
- Thompson P. (1990). Crawling from the Wreckage: The Labour Porcess and the Politics of Production. In Knights D. and Willmott H. (eds) *Labour Process Theory*. London: Macmillan.
- Tipton B (1973). *Conflict and Change in a Technical College*. Hutchinson : London.
- Tipton B. (1983). The Quality of Training and the Design of Work. In Gleeson (ed.) *Youth Training and the Search for Work*. London: RKP
- Todd I.(1980). BEC and the Law Teacher. In Harris P. & Lewis J. *Teaching the Law*. Asociation of Law Teachers.
- Trades Union Congress (1981). *The Chip at Work*. Trades Union Council Education Pamphlet. London :TUC.
- Venables E. (1967). *The Young Worker at College - A Study of the Local Tech*. London : Faber & Faber
- Wainwright J. and Francis A. (1984). *Office Automation and the Nature of Work*. Aldershot: Gower.
- Wakeham P. (1980). *Youth Unemployment*. Working Paper No 10, DE London
- Watts T. (1983) *Education, Unemployment and the Future of Work*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Ward R. (1993). Keynote Address to College Employers Forum Seminar on 'Pay Structures Post Incorporation'. Held 3 December 1992.

- Webster J. (1990). *Office Automation: The Labour Process & Women's Work in Britain*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Weiner M. (1981). *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850 -1980*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Wellington J (1987). Skills for the Future? Vocational Education & New Technology. In Holt M (ed.) *Skills and Vocationalism*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Werneke D (1983). *Microelectronic and Office Jobs: The Impact of the Chip on Womens Employment*. Geneva: International Labour Office.
- West J. (1982). New Technology & Womens Work in West J (ed.) *Work Women and the Labour Market*. London: RKP.
- Whitty G. (1981). *Ideology, Politics and Curriculum*. Course E353 Block 3 Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Whitty G. (1988). Curriculum Research and Curriculum Politics. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. Vol. 8 No 2 pp 109-117
- Wilkinson B. (1983). *The Shopfloor Politics of New Technology*. London: Heinemann Educational Books.,
- Williams R (1961). *The Long Revolution*. London: Chatto and Windus.
- Willis P. (1977). *Learning to Labour*. Aldershot: Gower.
- Wood S. (1989). The Transformation of Work? In Wood S. (ed.) *The Transformation of Work?* London: Hyman.
- Wray M, Moor C, Hill S. (1980). *Unified Vocational Preparation: An Evaluation of the Pilot Programme*. London: NFER
- Wright D. (1989). LENS In The Light Of TECs. *Personnel Management*. May pp42-45
- Young D. (Lord Young of Graffham) (1987). *Britain Resurgent: Return to a Wealth Creating Economy*. London: Centre for Policy Studies.